



US009278476B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Sato et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,278,476 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Mar. 8, 2016**

(54) **BLOW MOLDING DEVICE AND BLOW MOLDING METHOD**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 377 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **13/857,870**

(22) Filed: **Apr. 5, 2013**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2013/0241118 A1 Sep. 19, 2013

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. PCT/JP2011/072371, filed on Sep. 29, 2011.

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Oct. 8, 2010 (JP) 2010-228910

(51) **Int. Cl.**
B29C 49/30 (2006.01)
B29C 49/42 (2006.01)
(Continued)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **B29C 49/30** (2013.01); **B29C 49/4215** (2013.01); **B29C 49/649** (2013.01); **B29C 49/06** (2013.01); **B29C 49/4236** (2013.01); **B29C 49/48** (2013.01); **B29C 49/56** (2013.01); **B29C 49/6409** (2013.01); **B29C 2049/024** (2013.01);
(Continued)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

None

See application file for complete search history.

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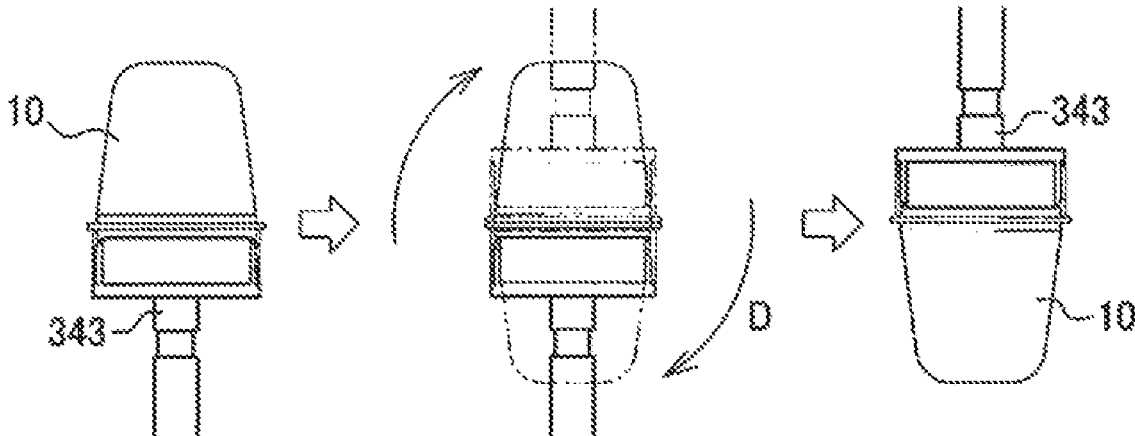
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The blow molding device includes a heating section that continuously transfers and heats preforms that respectively include a neck along a heating transfer path while supporting the preforms using transfer members in an inverted state, a blow molding section that simultaneously blow-molds N (N is an integer equal to or larger than 2) preforms that have been heated by the heating section in an upright state to form N containers, and an intermittent transfer section that intermittently transfers the N preforms from the heating section to the blow molding section. The intermittent transfer section includes a pitch conversion section that converts the arrangement pitch of the N preforms from a first pitch P1 to a second pitch P2 (P2>P1), and an inversion section that includes N inversion arms that respectively invert the N preforms from the inverted state to the upright state.

12 Claims, 18 Drawing Sheets



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FIG. 1

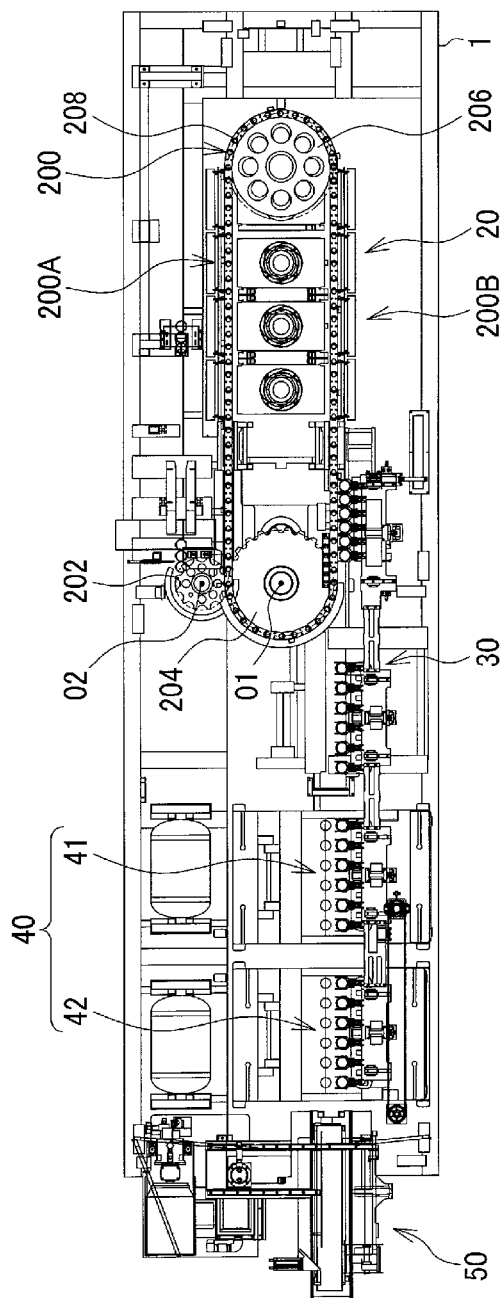


FIG. 2

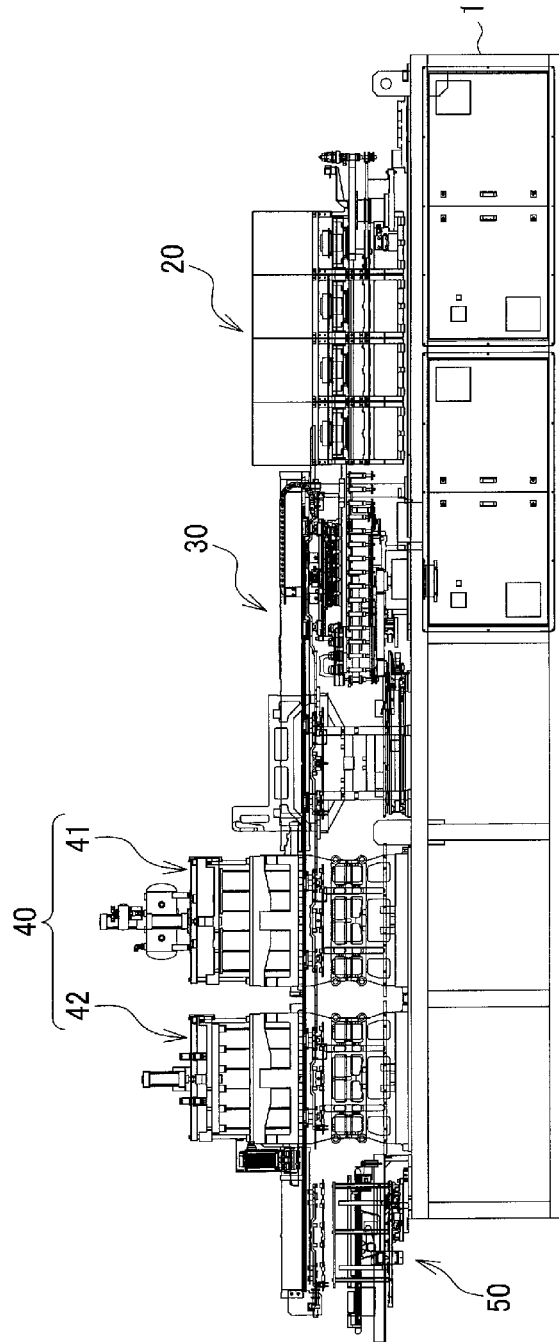


FIG. 3

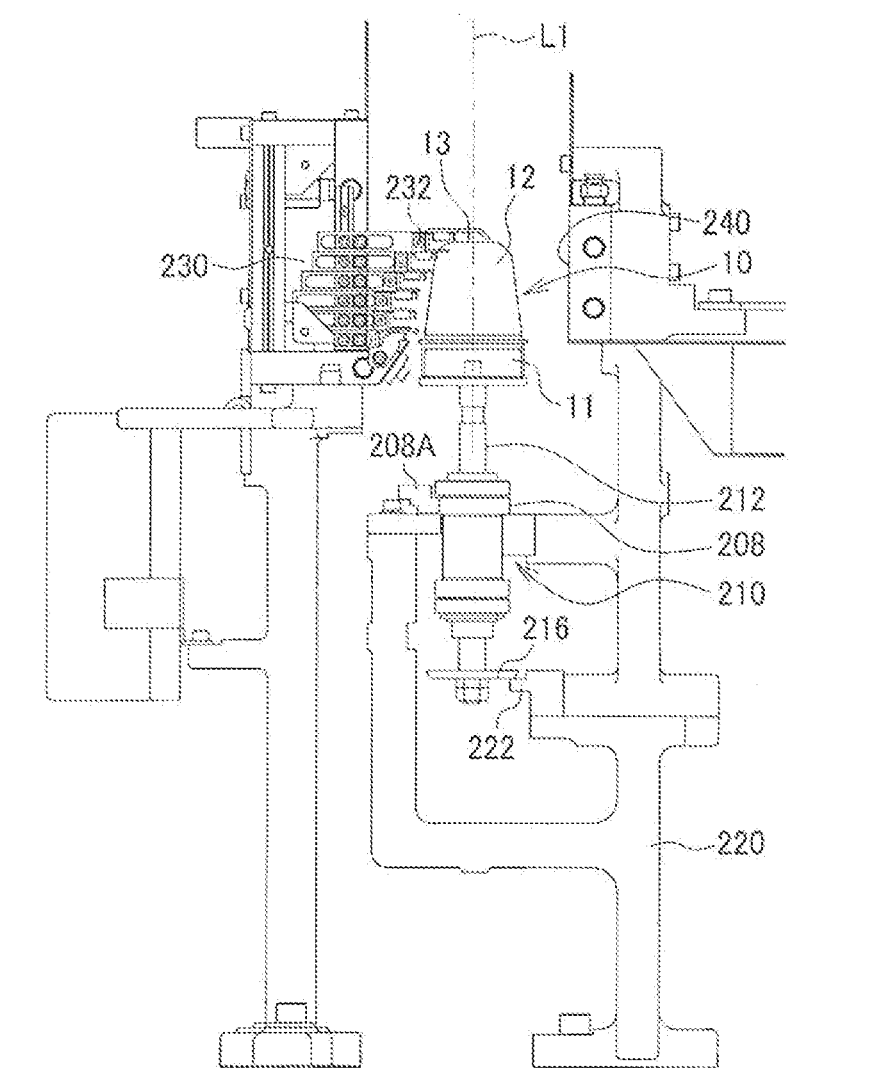


FIG. 4C

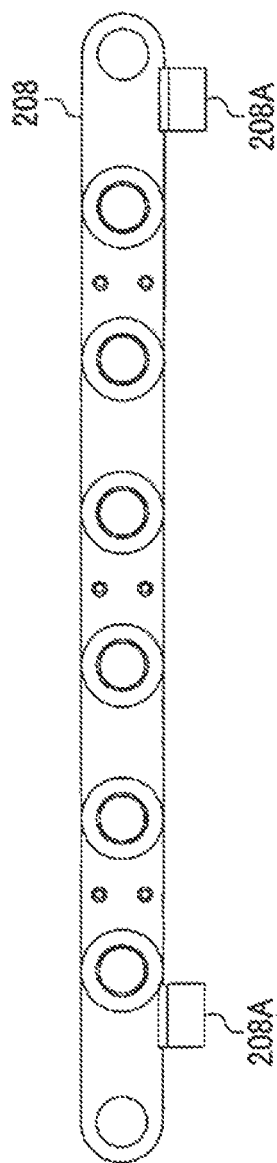


FIG. 4A

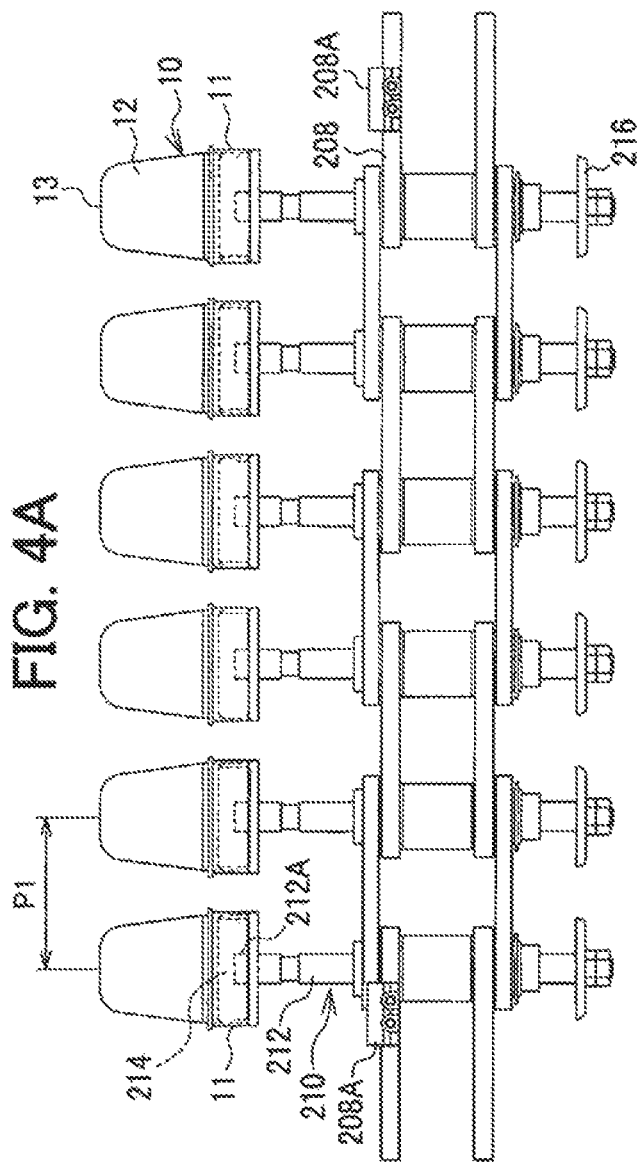


FIG. 4B

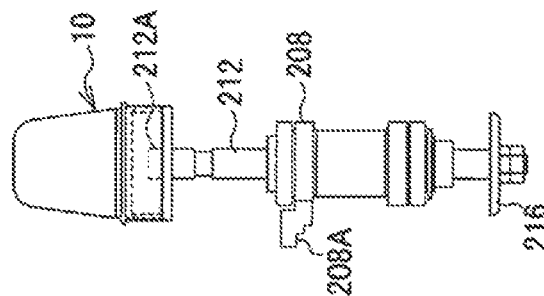


FIG. 5A

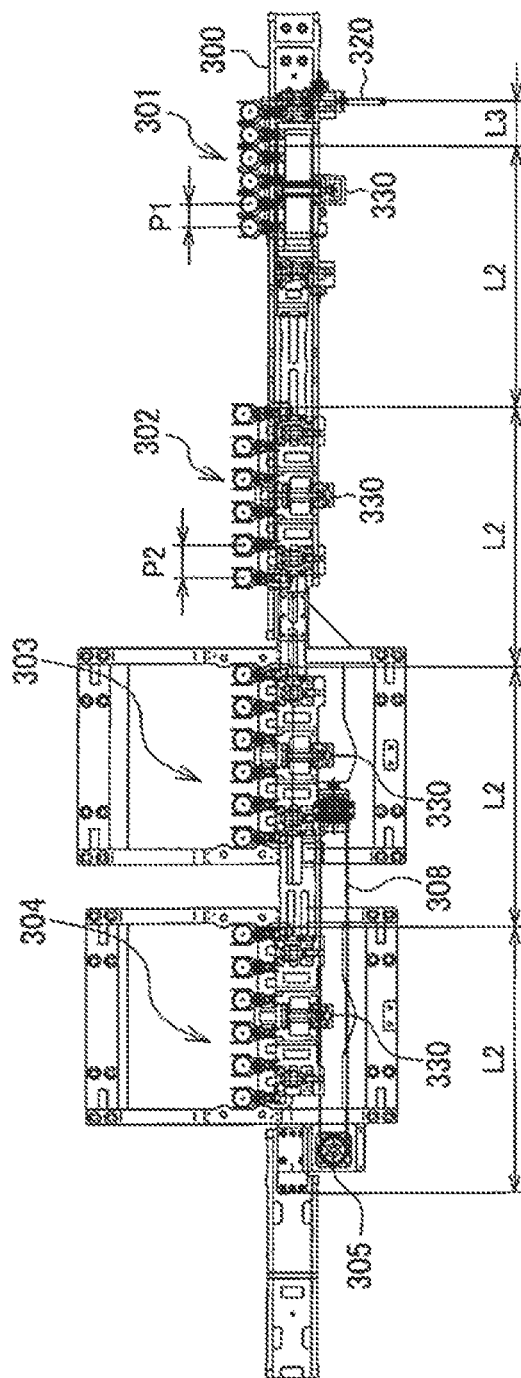


FIG. 5B

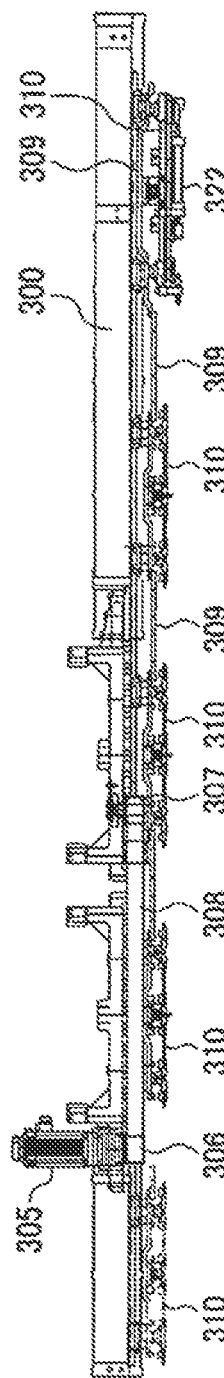


FIG. 6

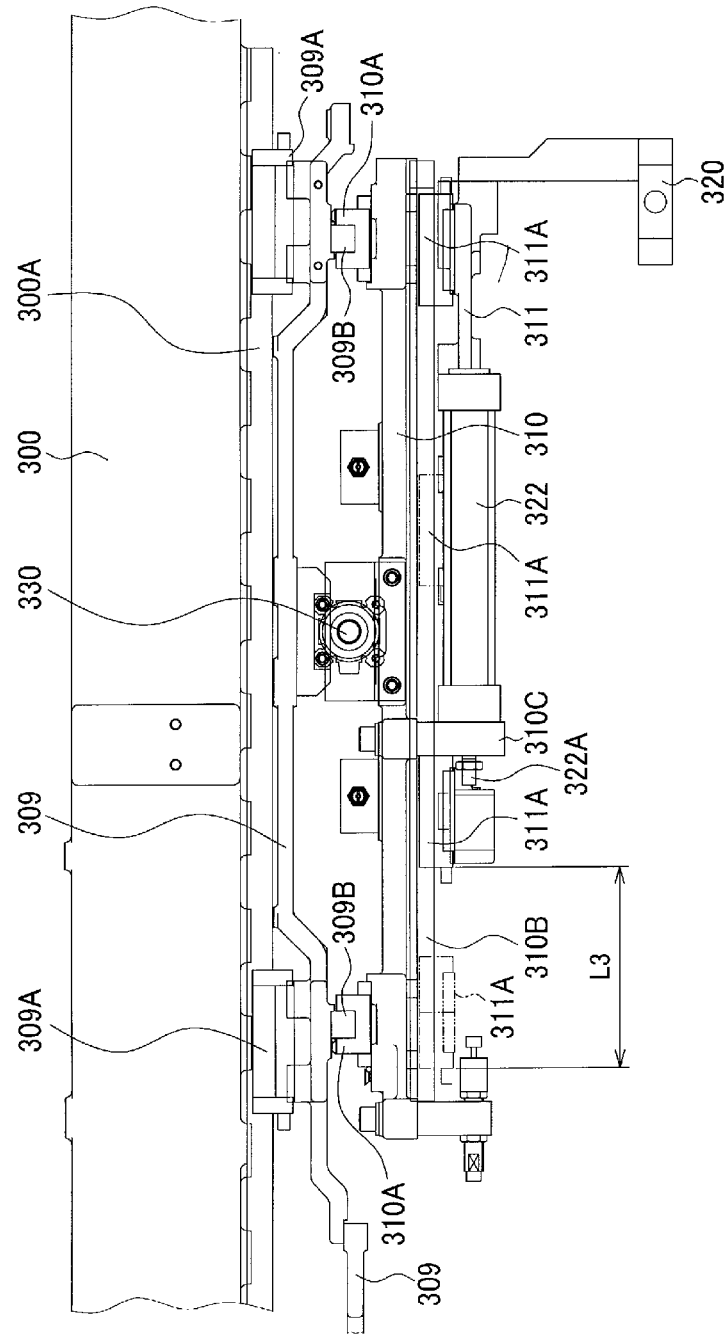


FIG. 7

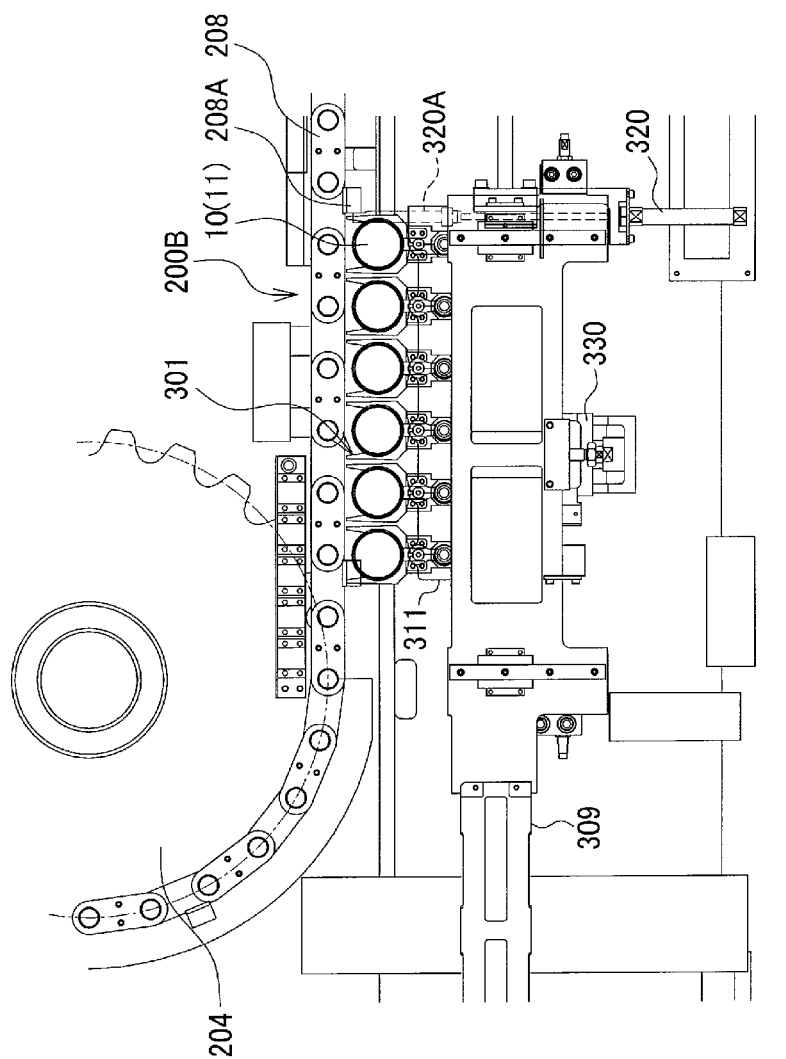


FIG. 8

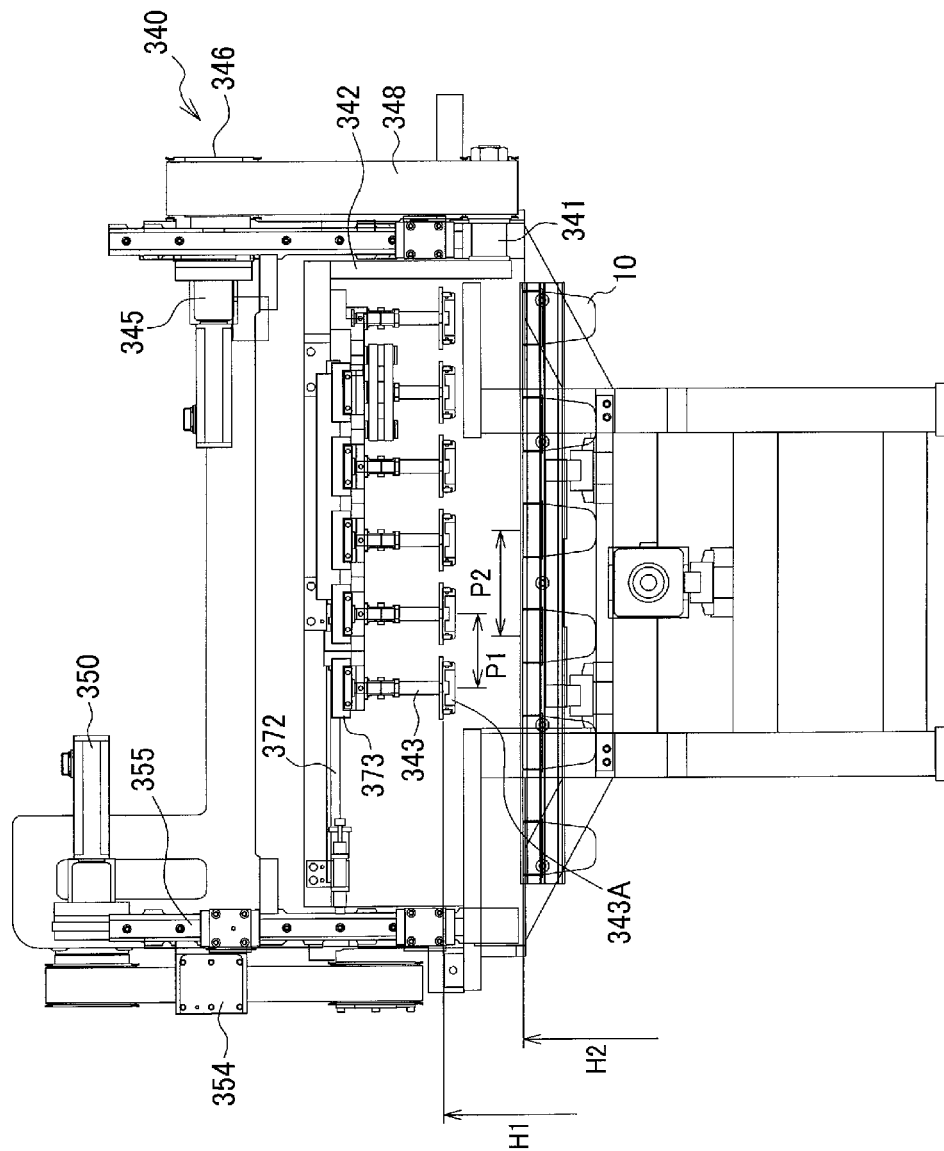


FIG. 9

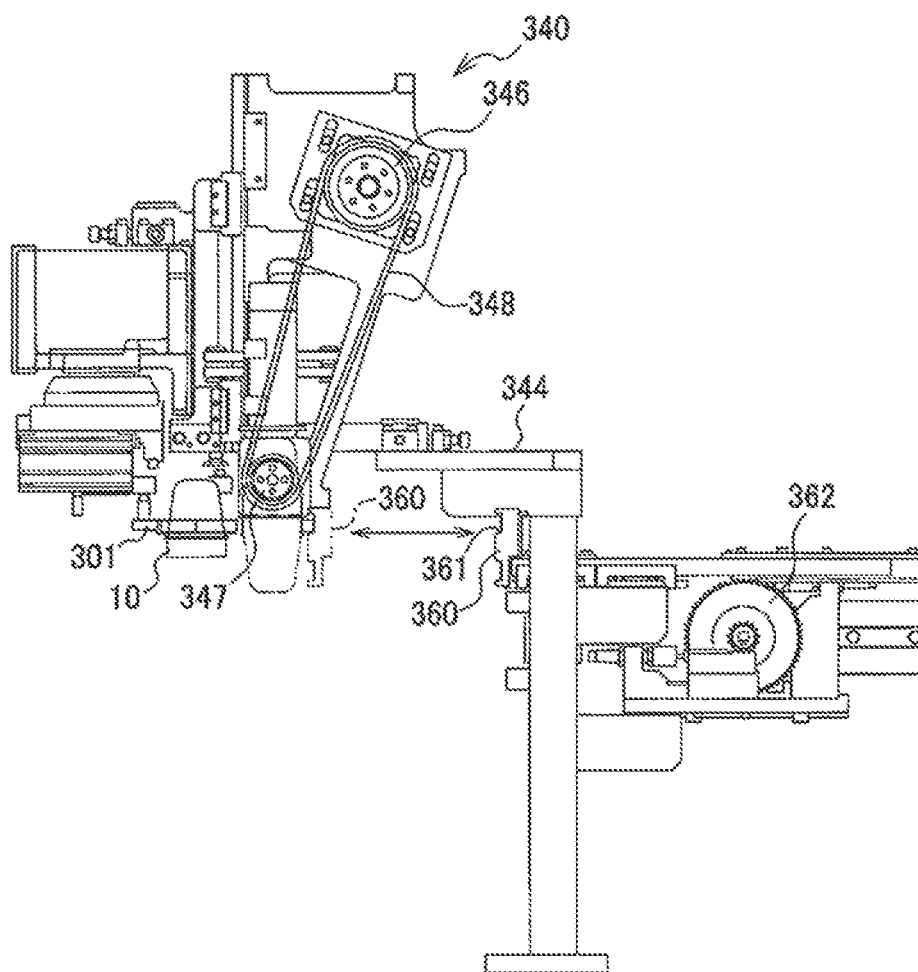


FIG. 10

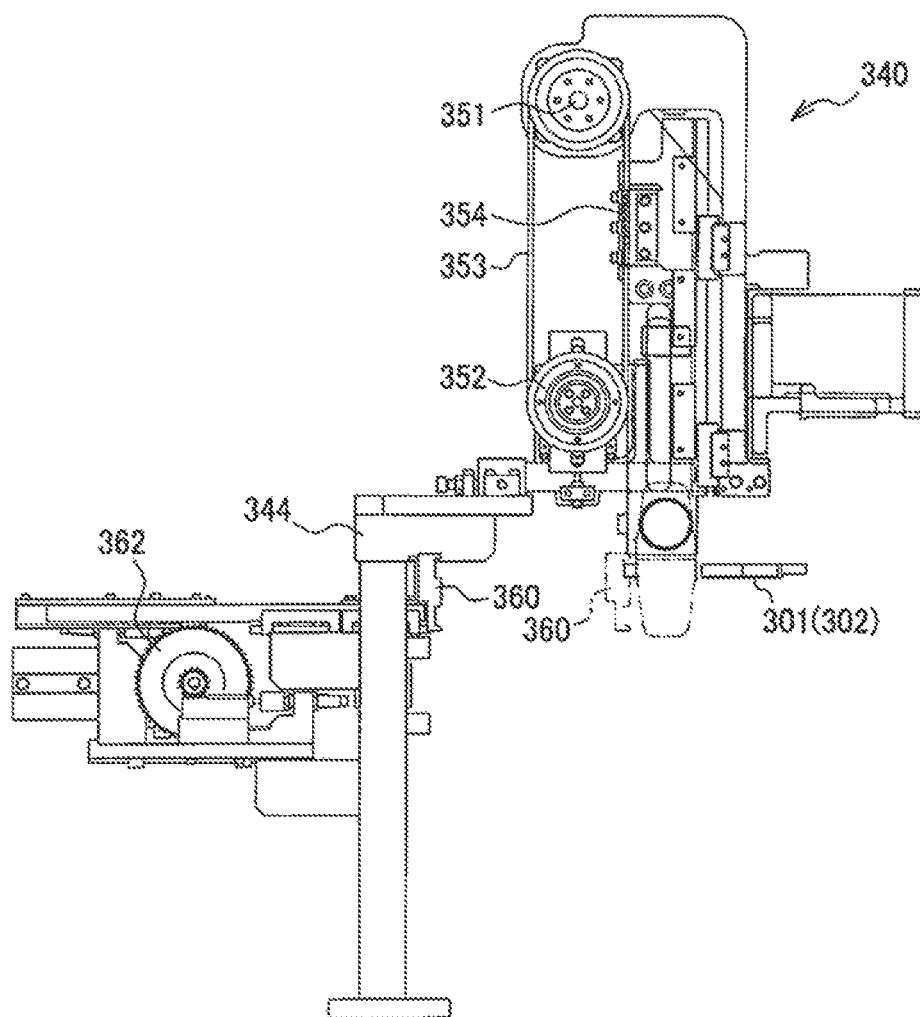


FIG. 11

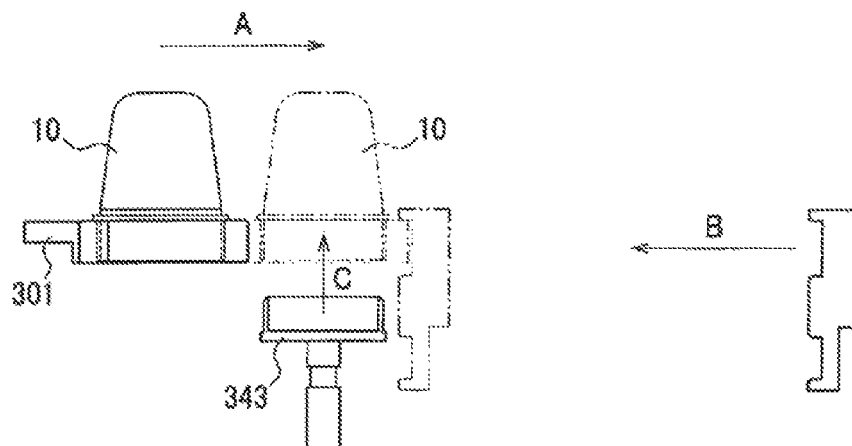


FIG. 12

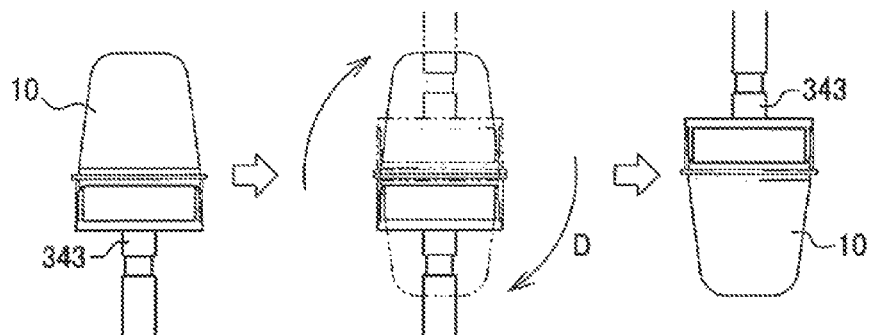


FIG. 13

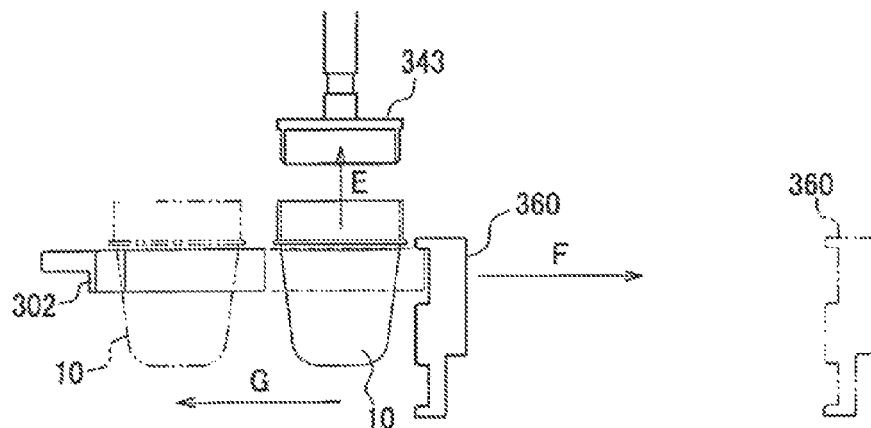


FIG. 14

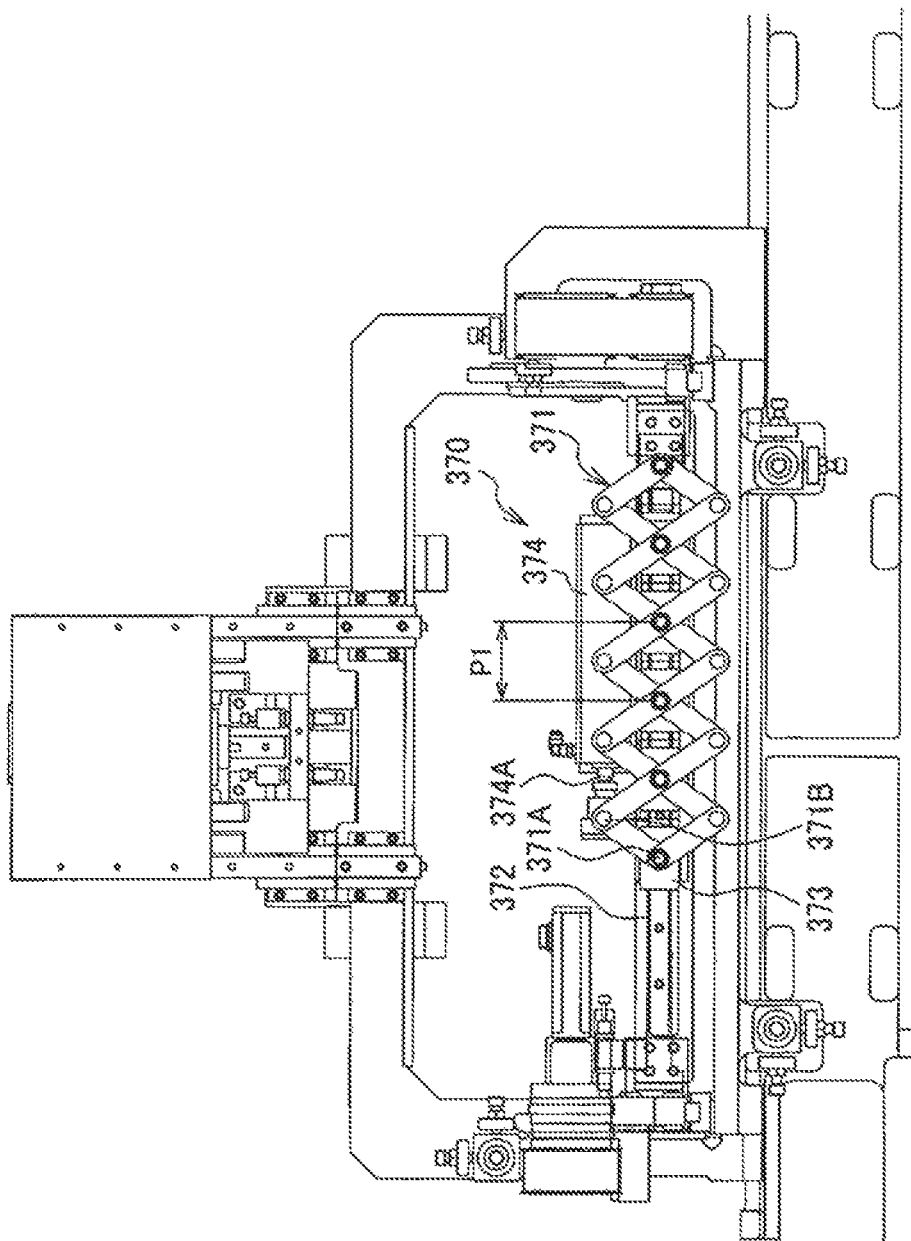


FIG. 15

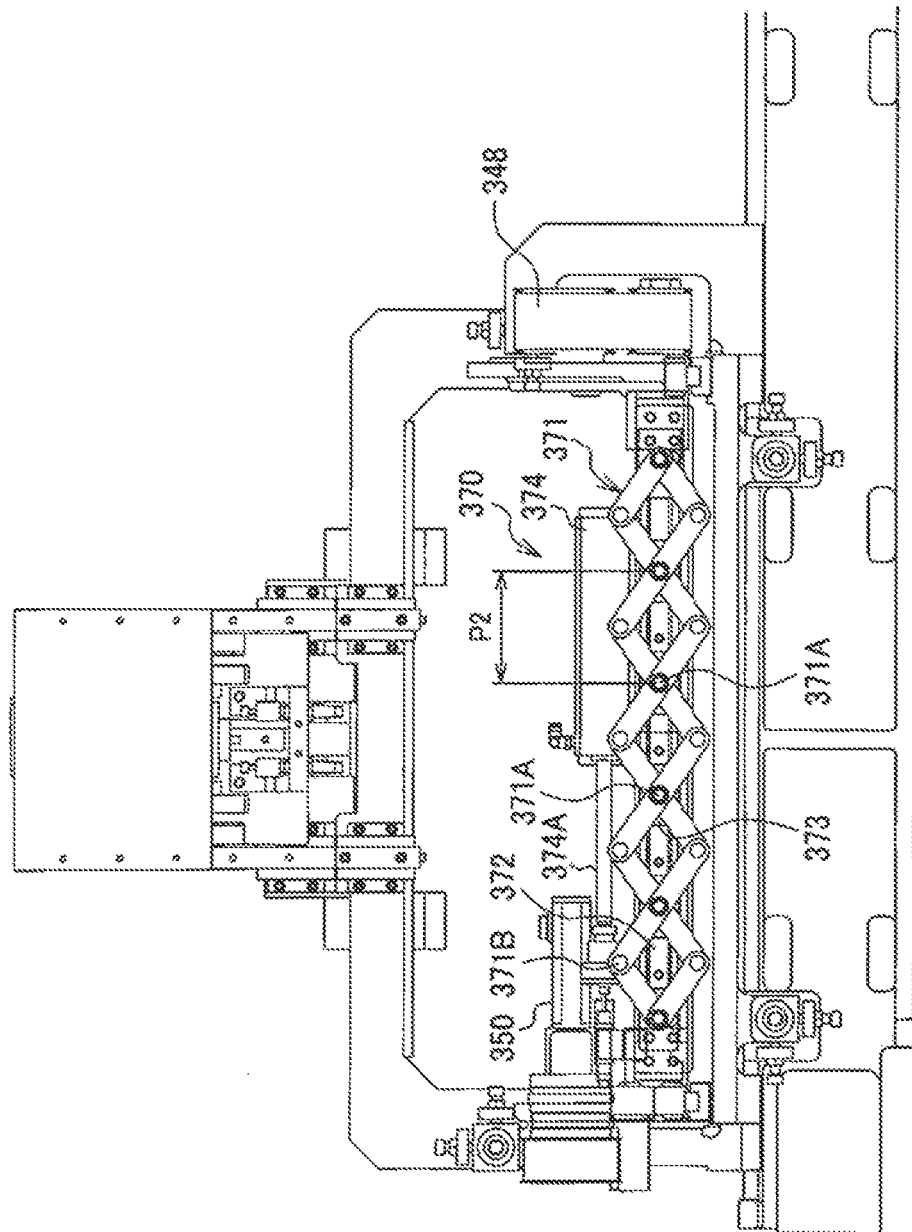


FIG. 16A

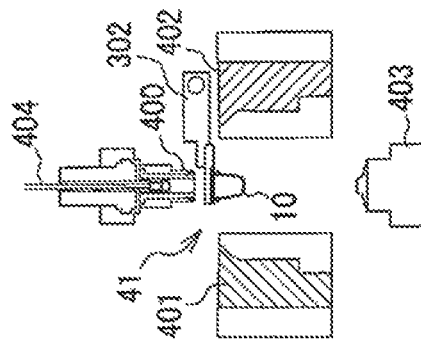


FIG. 16B

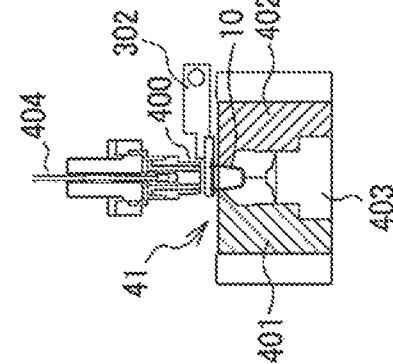


FIG. 16C

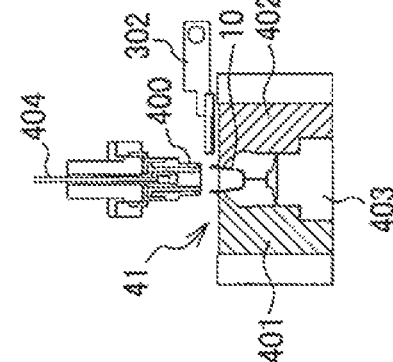


FIG. 16D

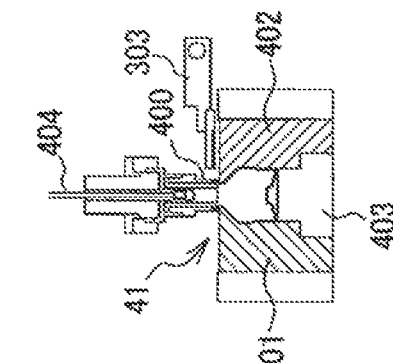


FIG. 17

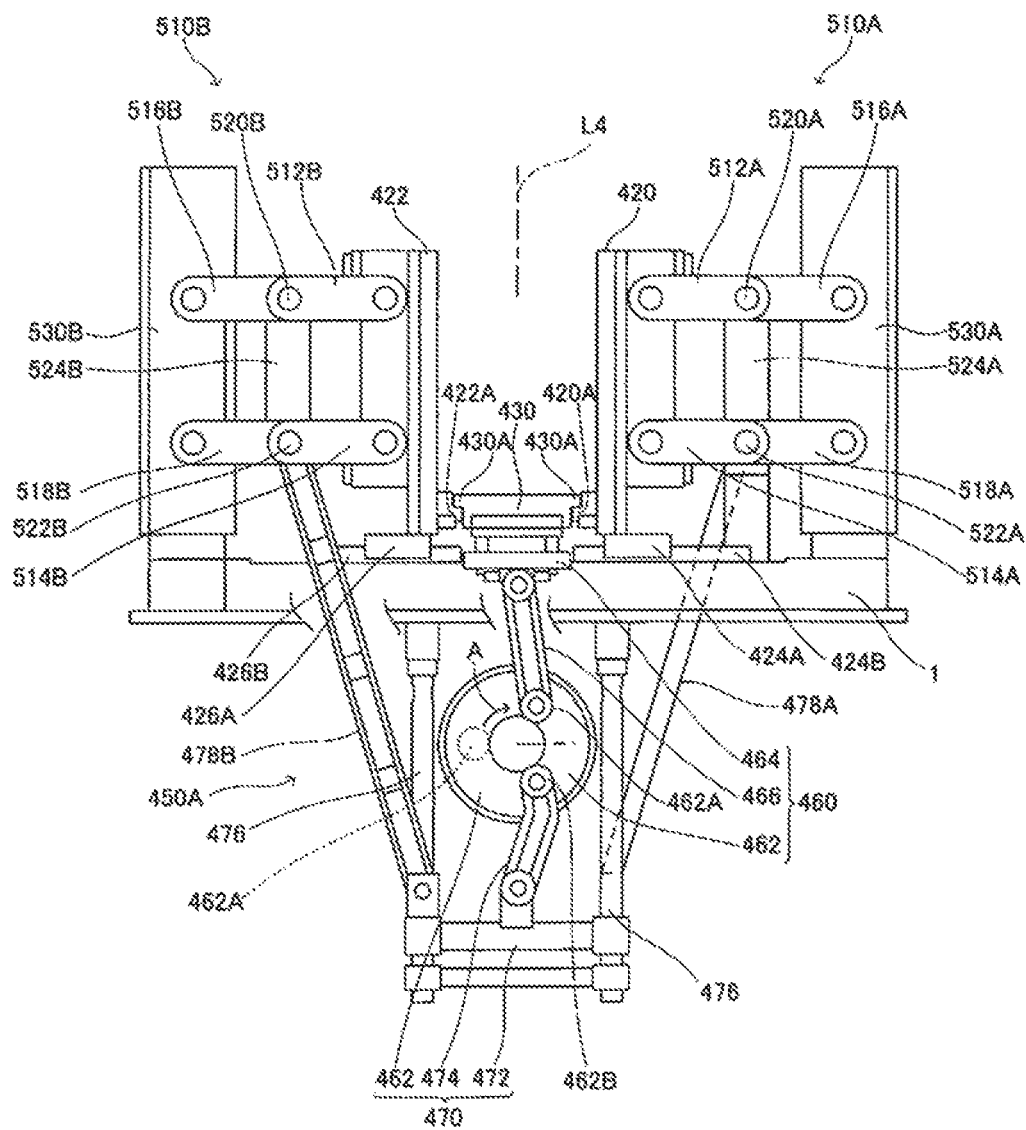


FIG. 18

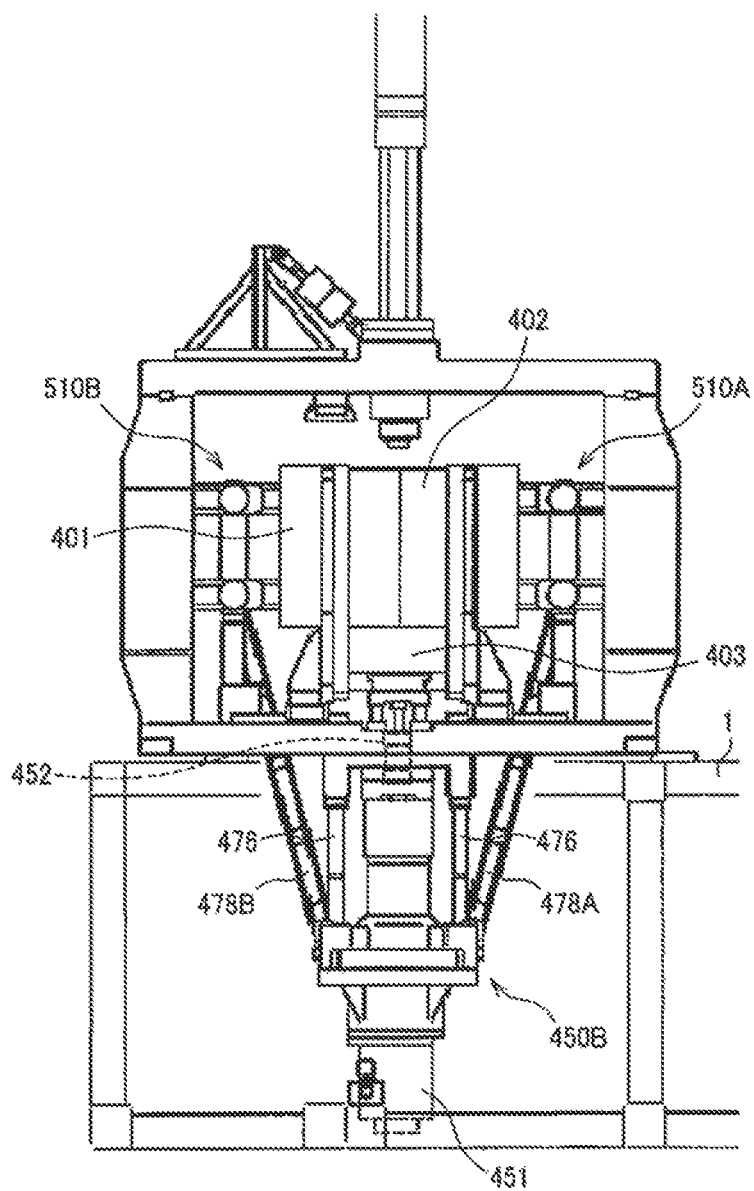


FIG. 19

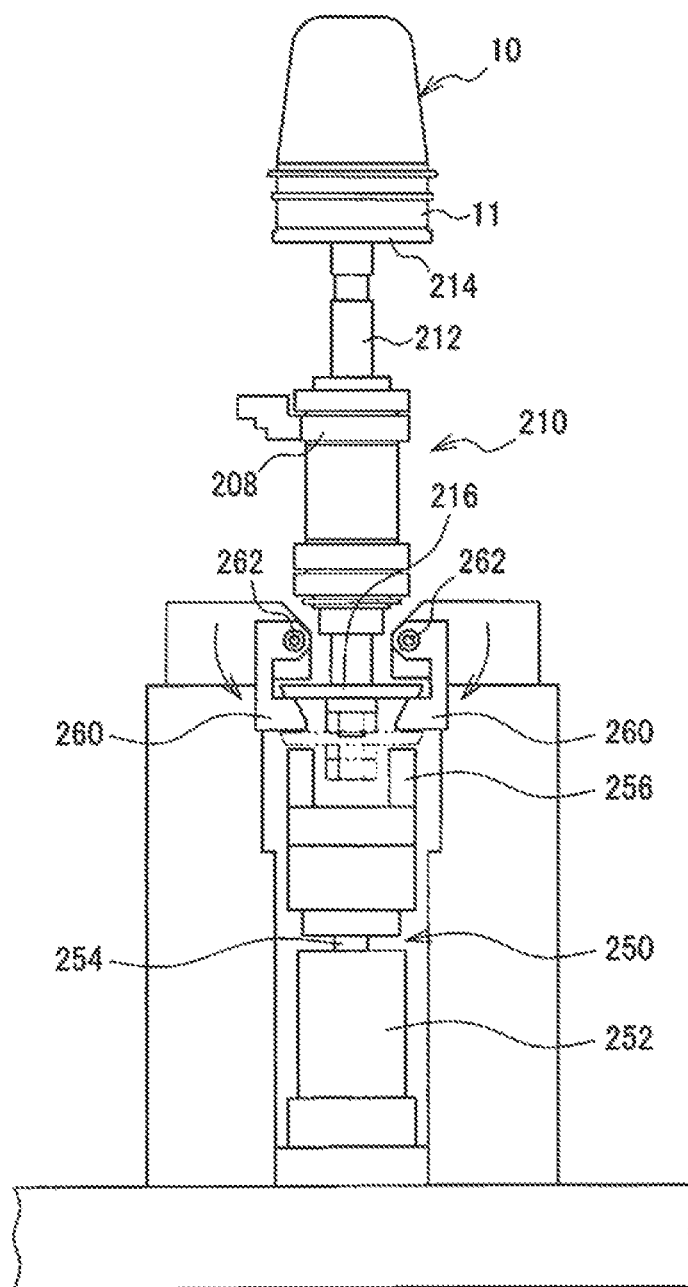
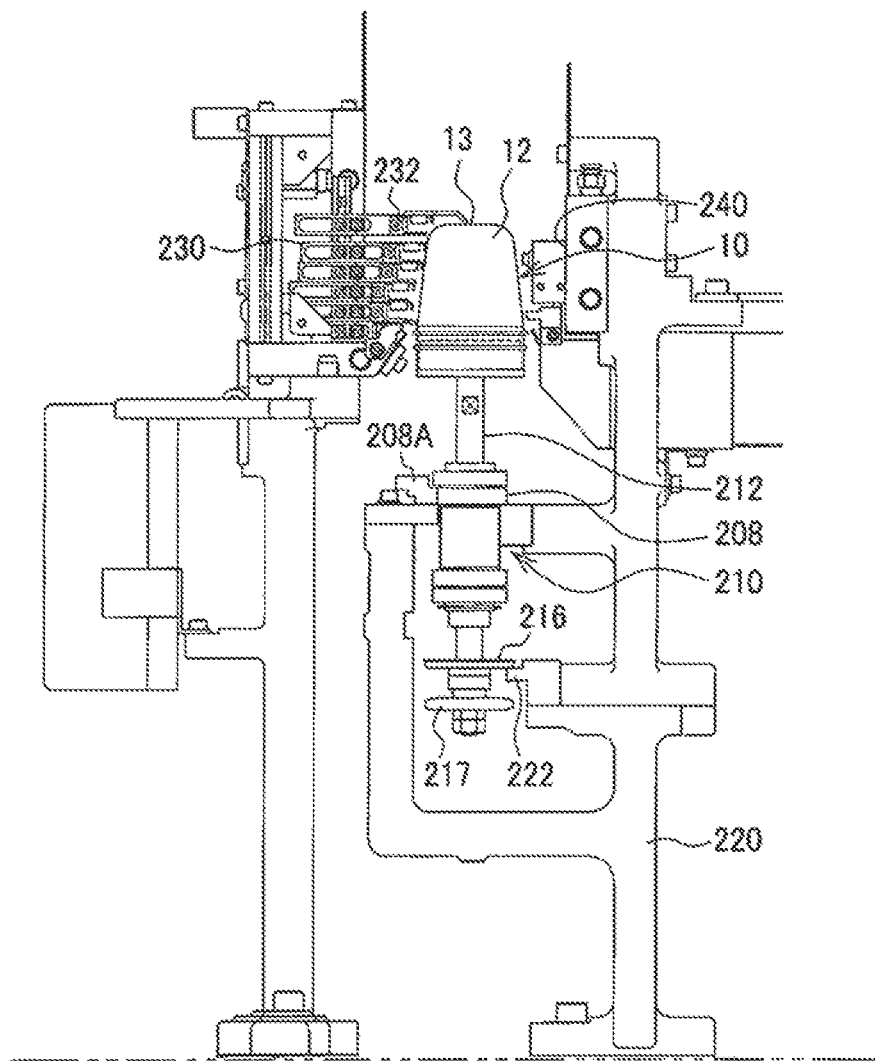


FIG. 20



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BLOW MOLDING DEVICE AND BLOW MOLDING METHOD**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is a continuation of International Patent Application No. PCT/JP2011/072371, having an international filing date of Sep. 29, 2011, which designated the United States and which claims priority from Japanese Patent Application No. 2010-228910 filed on Oct. 8, 2010, the entirety of both of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND**1. Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates to a two-stage blow molding device and a two-stage blow molding method that heat a supplied preform, and blow-mold the preform into a container.

2. Description of the Related Art

A cold parison or two-stage system includes a blow molding device separately from a preform injection molding device. A preform (parison) that has been injection-molded by the injection molding device, and cooled to room temperature is supplied to the blow molding device. The blow molding device is configured so that the supplied preform is heated to the optimum blow temperature using a heating section, and blow-molded into a container using a blow molding section. The preform is continuously transferred by the heating section, and N (N is an integer equal to or larger than 2) preforms are intermittently transferred from the heating section to the blow molding section. The blow molding section simultaneously blow-molds the N preforms into N containers.

U.S. Pat. No. 7,727,454, JP-A-2000-117821, and JP-A-2007-276327 disclose a two-stage blow molding device. In U.S. Pat. No. 7,727,454 and JP-A-2000-117821, the preform is heated in an upright state in which the opening of the preform is positioned on the upper side, and the preform in the upright state is blow-molded into a container. In JP-A-2007-276327, the preform is heated in an inverted state in which the opening of the preform is positioned on the lower side, and the preform in the inverted state is blow-molded into a container. In U.S. Pat. No. 7,727,454, JP-A-2000-117821, and JP-A-2007-276327, the preform heating pitch is set to be smaller than the blow molding pitch, and the pitch is converted between the heating section and the blow molding section.

In JP-A-2000-117821 and JP-A-2007-276327, the preform is transferred between the heating section and the blow molding section by transferring a preform carrier that holds the preform. The preform carrier that has become empty is returned to the heating section, and provided with a new preform. In JP-A-2000-117821, a blow molding operation is performed in a state in which the preform carrier is positioned in an upper transfer path having a blow molding position, and inverted using an inversion device, and the empty preform carrier is returned to the heating section through a lower transfer path. In the heating section, a new preform is supplied to the inverted preform carrier. The preform carrier is then inverted using an inversion device, and the preform is heated in the upright state.

A hot parison or one-stage blow molding device is configured so that N preforms that have been injection-molded by an injection molding section are blow-molded into N containers in a state in which the preforms retain heat applied during injection molding. As disclosed in JP-B-53-22096, a typical

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blow molding device is configured so that an injection molding section, a temperature control section, a blow molding section, and an ejection section are provided at four positions of a turntable, and a preform or a container is rotated using a neck mold. In this case, a preform that has been injection-molded in the upright state is transferred and blow-molded in the upright state. The one-stage system is characterized in that the number of preforms that are simultaneously injection-molded coincides with the number of preforms that are simultaneously blow-molded.

The two-stage blow molding device may heat a preform in the upright state (see U.S. Pat. No. 7,727,454 and JP-A-2000-117821). In this case, since the number of transfer members for which the structure becomes complex increases as a result of continuously transferring the preform in the upright state using the heating section, the cost of the device necessarily increases. In the heating section, a plurality of rod-like heaters that extend along the preform transfer path are disposed at a different height. Since the body of the preform in the upright state decreases in diameter (i.e., is tapered) toward the bottom thereof, the preform may be uniformly heated by disposing the lower rod-like heater close to the center of the transfer path as compared with the upper rod-like heater. In this case, if the preform that is transferred in the heating section falls by accident, the preform is necessarily caught by the lower rod-like heater. Such a situation is dangerous. Therefore, the device disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 7,727,454 or JP-A-2000-117821 that heats a preform in the upright state is not suitable for a preform (e.g., wide-mouth preform) that is formed so that the body decreases in diameter (i.e., is tapered) toward the bottom.

The above problem does not occur when using the device disclosed in JP-A-2007-276327 in which a preform is heated in the inverted state. It may be advantageous to blow-mold a preform in the inverted state into a container in the inverted state from the viewpoint of preform transfer. However, placement of equipment may become difficult from the viewpoint of blow molding since a drive mechanism for inserting a blow core mold or a stretching rod into the downward opening of the preform significantly occupies the space inside the stage. Therefore, a relatively large clamping mechanism that opens/closes and clamps a heavy blow mold and/or bottom mold cannot be disposed inside the stage. In this case, a relatively large clamping mechanism that opens/closes and clamps the blow mold and/or bottom mold must be disposed on or above the stage.

SUMMARY

Several aspects of the invention may provide a blow molding device and a blow molding method that can implement a compact device, and can reduce cost.

According to one aspect of the invention, there is provided a blow molding device comprising:

a heating section that continuously transfers and heats a plurality of preforms that respectively include a neck along a heating transfer path while supporting the plurality of preforms using a plurality of transfer members in an inverted state in which the neck is positioned on a lower side;

a blow molding section that simultaneously blow-molds N (N is an integer equal to or larger than 2) preforms that have been heated by the heating section in an upright state in which the neck is positioned on an upper side to form N containers; and

an intermittent transfer section that intermittently transfers the N preforms from the heating section to the blow molding section,

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the intermittent transfer section including:

a pitch conversion section that converts an arrangement pitch of the N preforms from a first pitch P1 in the heating section to a second pitch P2 ($P2 > P1$) in the blow molding section; and

an inversion section that includes N inversion arms that respectively invert the N preforms from the inverted state to the upright state.

According to one aspect of the invention, when the N preforms that have been continuously transferred and heated in the inverted state along the heating transfer path are intermittently transferred to the blow molding section by the intermittent transfer section, the pitch conversion section converts the pitch of the N preforms from the first pitch P1 (heating pitch) to the second pitch P2 (blow molding pitch), and the inversion section inverts the N preforms from the inverted state to the upright state. Since the transfer member that transfers the preform in the inverted state along the heating transfer path can hold the preform by utilizing the downward neck (opening) of the preform, the structure can be simplified, and the transfer operation is stabilized as compared with the case of holding the preform in the upright state. Since the majority of transfer members are transferred at the first pitch P1, simplification of the structure of the transfer member significantly contributes to a reduction in cost. In the blow molding section, the N preforms in the upright state are blow-molded. The number of transfer arms that transfer the N preforms in the upright state in the intermittent transfer section is significantly smaller than the number of transfer members in the heating section. Therefore, an increase in cost can be minimized even if the structure of the transfer arm becomes complex. Moreover, when the preform is blow-molded in the upright state, a blow core mold and a stretching rod having a relatively light weight, and a drive mechanism that drives the blow core mold and the stretching rod can be disposed above (over) the stage (i.e., the space inside the stage is not occupied). This makes it possible to dispose a heavy clamping mechanism inside the stage, for example.

In the blow molding device,

the heating transfer path may include a linear transfer path in which the N preforms to be transferred to the intermittent transfer section are continuously transferred, and

the inversion section may include a shaft that is parallel to the linear transfer path, and a swing arm that swings the N inversion arms around the shaft.

Since the N preforms transferred from the linear transfer path of the heating section are swung around the shaft that is parallel to the linear transfer path, the N preforms transferred from the heating section can be inverted while reducing the swing radius.

In the blow molding device,

the pitch conversion section may be provided to the swing arm, and may convert a pitch of the N inversion arms from the first pitch P1 to the second pitch P2.

According to the above configuration, since the pitch conversion section is provided in the inversion section, the size of the device can be reduced as compared with the case of separately providing the inversion section and the pitch conversion section.

In the blow molding device,

the pitch conversion section may convert the pitch of the N inversion arms while the swing arm swings.

According to the above configuration, the operation time can be reduced by performing the inversion operation and the pitch conversion operation in parallel.

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In the blow molding device,

the intermittent transfer section may further include:

N first transfer arms that intermittently carry out the N preforms from the heating transfer path along a first direction, and transfer the N preforms to the N inversion arms;

N second transfer arms that intermittently transfer the N preforms transferred from the N inversion arms to the blow molding section along the first direction; and

a first drive source that intermittently drive the N first transfer arms and the N second transfer arms.

This makes it possible to continuously transfer the N preforms to the first transfer arms, the inversion arms, and the second transfer arms by driving the N first transfer arms and the N second transfer arms using the first drive source (single drive source).

In the blow molding device,

the intermittent transfer section may further include:

a holding section that holds a free end of the N first transfer arms or the N second transfer arms when the N preforms are transferred between the N first transfer arms and the N inversion arms, and when the N preforms are transferred between the N second transfer arms and the N inversion arms; and

a moving mechanism that moves the holding section between a holding position and a standby position, the holding section holding the free end of the N first transfer arms or the N second transfer arms when the holding section is set to the holding position, and not interfering with the swing arm when the holding section is set to the standby position.

Since the N first transfer arms and the N second transfer arms are in a cantilever state, the N preforms can be stably transferred to/from the N inversion arms by holding the free end of the N first transfer arms and the N second transfer arms using the holding section.

In the blow molding device,

the heating transfer path may include an endless chain, and engagement sections that are formed on the endless chain at intervals of the N preforms, and

the intermittent transfer section may further include:

a first rail that extends along the first direction;

a first slide member that moves along the first rail;

a second rail that is supported by the first slide member, and extends along a second direction that is perpendicular to the first direction;

a second slide member that supports the N second transfer arms, and moves along the second rail;

a third rail that is supported by the second slide member, and extends along the first direction;

a third slide member that supports the N first transfer arms, and moves along the third rail;

a second drive source that drives the second slide member along the second direction;

a first forward/backward drive section that is moved forward and backward to an engagement position with the engagement section of the chain and a non-engagement position, and drives the third slide member along the third rail to move the N first transfer arms together with the chain; and

a second forward/backward drive section that drives the third slide member along the third rail by a distance by which the N first transfer arms have been moved by the first forward/backward drive section to return the N first transfer arms.

This makes it possible to receive the N preforms from the heating section while simultaneously driving the N first transfer arms and the N second transfer arms in the first direction and the second direction using the first drive source and the second drive source, and moving the N first transfer arms at the same speed as the chain independently of the N second transfer arms.

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In the blow molding device,
the blow molding section may include a primary blow molding section and a secondary blow molding section,
the N second transfer arms may intermittently transfer the N preforms transferred from the N inversion arms to the primary blow molding section, and

the intermittent transfer section may further include N third transfer arms that intermittently transfer N primary blow-molded articles that have been molded by the primary blow molding section to the secondary blow molding section using the drive source.

According to the above configuration, when implementing a blow molding device that molds a heat-resistant container using the primary blow molding section and the secondary blow molding section, the N preforms can be transferred from the heating section to the secondary blow molding section by continuously transferring the N preforms or containers in order of the first transfer arms, the inversion arms, the second transfer arms, and the third transfer arms by driving the N first transfer arms, the N second transfer arms, and the N third transfer arms using a single drive source.

The blow molding device may further comprise:

an ejection section that is adjacent to the secondary blow molding section, and removes N secondary blow-molded articles to outside of the blow molding device,

the intermittent transfer section may further include N fourth transfer arms that intermittently transfer the N secondary blow-molded articles that have been molded by the secondary blow molding section to the ejection section using the drive source.

According to the above configuration, the N preforms or containers can be transferred from the heating section to the ejection section by continuously transferring the N preforms or containers in order of the first transfer arms, the inversion arms, the second transfer arms, the third transfer arms, and the fourth transfer arms by driving the N first transfer arms, the N second transfer arms, the N third transfer arms, and the N fourth transfer arms using a single drive source.

In the blow molding device,

each of the plurality of preforms may include a body that follows the neck, and a bottom that closes the body, a diameter of the body being smaller on a side of the bottom than on a side of the neck, and

the heating section may include a plurality of rod-like heaters that heat the body of each of the plurality of preforms, and are provided at a different height, the plurality of rod-like heaters may be provided along the heating transfer path, a rod-like heater among the plurality of rod-like heaters that is situated at a higher position being disposed closer to a centerline of the heating transfer path.

According to the above configuration, when the body of the preform is tapered toward the bottom, the body of the preform can be uniformly heated by disposing the rod-like heaters so that the distance between each rod-like heater and the body of the preform is identical. In this case, even if the preform falls from the transfer member, it is not likely that the preform in the inverted state comes in contact with the rod-like heater as compared with the case of transferring the preform in the upright state.

The blow molding device may further comprise:

a star wheel that rotates and supplies the plurality of preforms to the plurality of transfer members in the inverted state,

the heating transfer path may include a first sprocket, a second sprocket, and an endless chain that is fitted around the first sprocket and the second sprocket, and

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the heating section may further include a push-up mechanism that pushes one of the plurality of transfer members upward along a line that connects a center of the star wheel and a center of the first sprocket, and inserts part of the transfer member into the neck of the preform in the inverted state.

According to the above configuration, when the preform supplied by the star wheel has been rotated to the position along the line that connects the center of the star wheel and the center of the first sprocket, the transfer member is pushed upward by the push-up mechanism. Therefore, the preform is held by the transfer member in a state in which part of the transfer member is inserted into the neck of the preform. This makes it unnecessary to dispose another star wheel coaxially with the first sprocket. As a result, a reduction in cost can be achieved due to a decrease in the number of members.

In the blow molding device,

each of the plurality of transfer members may include a rotation shaft, and a friction plate that is secured on the rotation shaft, and

the heating section may include a contact section that comes in contact with the friction plate along the heating transfer path.

In this case, the structure can be significantly simplified, and the parts cost can be significantly reduced as compared with a related-art structure that causes a sprocket provided to the transfer member to engage a chain in order to rotate the preform.

According to another aspect of the invention, there is provided a blow molding method comprising:

a heating step that continuously transfers and heats a plurality of preforms that respectively include a neck along a heating transfer path while supporting the plurality of preforms using a plurality of transfer members in an inverted state in which the neck is positioned on a lower side;

a blow molding step that simultaneously blow-molds N (N is an integer equal to or larger than 2) preforms that have been heated by the heating step in an upright state in which the neck is positioned on an upper side to form N containers; and

an intermittent transfer step that intermittently transfers the N preforms from a heating section to a blow molding section, the intermittent transfer step including:

a pitch conversion step that converts an arrangement pitch of the N preforms into from a first pitch P1 in the heating step to a second pitch P2 ($P2 > P1$) in the blow molding step; and an inversion step that inverts the N preforms from the inverted state to the upright state.

The blow molding method can achieve advantageous effects equivalent to those achieved by the blow molding device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a plan view illustrating a blow molding device.

FIG. 2 is a front view illustrating a blow molding device.

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view illustrating a heating section.

FIGS. 4A, 4B, and 4C are respectively a front view, a side view, and a plan view illustrating a chain.

FIGS. 5A and 5B are respectively a plan view and a front view illustrating an intermittent transfer section.

FIG. 6 is a partial enlarged view of FIG. 5B.

FIG. 7 is a plan view illustrating a first transfer arm of an intermittent transfer section.

FIG. 8 is a front view illustrating an inversion section provided in an intermittent transfer section.

FIG. 9 is a right side view illustrating an inversion section.

FIG. 10 is a left side view illustrating an inversion section.

FIG. 11 is a view illustrating an operation that transfers a preform in an inverted state from a first transfer arm to an inversion arm.

FIG. 12 is a view illustrating an operation that inverts a preform using an inversion arm.

FIG. 13 is a view illustrating an operation that transfers a preform in an upright state from an inversion arm to a second transfer arm.

FIG. 14 is a plan view illustrating a pitch conversion section set to a first pitch P1.

FIG. 15 is a plan view illustrating a pitch conversion section set to a second pitch P2.

FIGS. 16A to 16D are views illustrating a blow molding cycle of a blow molding section.

FIG. 17 is a view illustrating a clamping mechanism of a blow molding section.

FIG. 18 is a view illustrating another example of a clamping mechanism of a blow molding section.

FIG. 19 is a side view illustrating a push-up mechanism that pushes a transfer member upward.

FIG. 20 is a cross-sectional view illustrating a heating section according to a modification in which a rotation sprocket is additionally provided.

DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

Exemplary embodiments of the invention are described in detail below with reference to a comparative example. Note that the following exemplary embodiments do not in any way limit the scope of the invention defined by the claims laid out herein. Note also that all of the elements described in connection with the following exemplary embodiments should not necessarily be taken as essential elements of the invention.

1. Outline of Blow Molding Device

FIG. 1 is a plan view illustrating a blow molding device, and FIG. 2 is a front view illustrating the blow molding device. As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, a heating section 20, an intermittent transfer section 30, and a blow molding section 40 are provided on a stage 1 of the blow molding device.

Several embodiments of the invention relate to a blow molding device that molds a heat-resistant wide-mouth container. For example, a container having a neck outer diameter of 43 mm or more is referred to as "wide-mouth container". A preform used to blow-mold a wide-mouth container is referred to as "wide-mouth preform".

As illustrated in FIG. 3, the heating section 10 continuously transfers a body 12 of a wide-mouth preform 10 (i.e., preform) that includes a neck 11 along an endless heating transfer path 200 (see FIG. 1) in an inverted state in which the neck 11 is positioned on the lower side. The blow molding section 40 simultaneously blow-molds N (N is an integer equal to or larger than 2 (N=6 in one embodiment)) preforms 10 into a container in an upright state in which the neck 11 is positioned on the upper side. The intermittent transfer section 30 intermittently transfers N preforms from the heating section 20 to the blow molding section 40.

When molding a heat-resistant container, the blow molding section 40 may include a primary blow molding section 41 and a secondary blow molding section 42. The primary blow molding section 41 subjects N preforms 10 in the upright state to primary blow molding to form N primary blow-molded articles, and heats the N primary blow-molded articles using a heated primary blow cavity mold. The N primary blow-molded articles that have been removed from the primary blow cavity mold and have shrunk are subjected

to secondary blow molding by the secondary blow molding section 42 in the upright state, and heated using a heated secondary blow mold to form N final molded articles (secondary blow-molded articles) that exhibit heat resistance. An ejection section 50 that removes the N final molded articles in the upright state may also be provided on the stage 1.

2. Heating Section

In the heating section 20, the preform 10 that is transferred in the inverted state along a shooter (not illustrated in the drawings) is continuously transferred to the heating transfer path 200 due to rotation of a star wheel (feed section) 202 (see FIG. 1). The heating transfer path 200 includes a chain 208 that is fitted around a first sprocket 204 and a second sprocket 206. As illustrated in FIG. 4A, a plurality of transfer members 210 that respectively support the preform 10 in the inverted state are secured on the chain 208 at a first pitch P1.

The transfer member 210 includes a holding member 214 that is provided at the upper end of a rotation shaft 212 that is rotatably supported by the chain 208, and inserted into the downward opening formed in the neck 11 of the preform 10, the preform being placed on the holding member 214. Since the holding member 214 does not require an elastic member such as that provided to a holding member 343A of an inversion arm 343 described later, the structure of the holding member 214 is simplified. Therefore, the number of parts of each of the plurality of transfer members 210 can be reduced, so that the parts cost can be reduced.

The upper end of the rotation shaft 212 may be a bolt 212A (see FIGS. 4A and 4B). In this case, the holding member 214 includes a nut that is attached to the bolt 212A. Alternatively, a nut hole for attaching a bolt may be formed in the upper end of the rotation shaft 212, and the holding member 214 may be attached to the rotation shaft 212 using the bolt 212A. Therefore, when molding the preform 10 that differs in the size of the neck 11, the holding member 214 can be exchanged corresponding to the size of the neck 11, and attached to the rotation shaft 212.

The transfer member 210 is configured so that a rotation disc (friction plate) 216 is secured on the lower end of the rotation shaft 212. The disc 216 is a substitute for a sprocket that is normally used. As illustrated in FIGS. 4B and 4C, engagement sections 208A protrude from the chain 208 at intervals of N (=6) transfer members 210.

The heating transfer path 200 includes an upstream-side first linear transfer path 200A and a downstream-side second linear transfer path 200B (see FIG. 1). The heating mechanism illustrated in FIG. 3 is disposed in the first linear transfer path 200A and the second linear transfer path 200B. The heating mechanism includes a heater section 230 and reflector section 240 that are provided on a frame 220, and disposed on either side of a centerline L1 of the heating transfer path 200. The heater section 230 includes a plurality of rod-like heaters 232 that heat the body 12 of the preform 10, and are provided at a different height. A contact section 222 that comes in contact with the lower side of the disc 216 of the transfer member 210 is formed on the frame 220. When the transfer member 210 that holds the preform 10 is transferred by the chain 208 in the direction perpendicular to the sheet of FIG. 3, the disc 216 (i.e., friction plate) that is transferred together with the transfer member 210 comes in frictional contact with the contact section 222. A rotational force is thus applied to the disc 216 from the contact section 222, and the rotation shaft 212 that is rotatably supported by the chain 208 is rotated. The preform 10 is thus rotated. The preform is normally rotated by allowing a sprocket provided to the transfer member to engage the chain that is stationary or driven. In contrast, the rotation structure according to one embodiment

of the invention that includes the disk **216** and the contact section **222** has a simple configuration.

Radiant heat rays from the heater section **230** and heat rays obtained by reflecting the radiant heat rays using the reflector section **240** are applied to the preform **10** that is transferred along the heating transfer path **200** while being rotated, so that the entire body **12** of the preform **10** can be uniformly heated.

As illustrated in FIG. 3, the wide-mouth preform **10** includes a bottom **13** that closes the body that follows the neck **11**, and the diameter of the body **12** is smaller on the side of the neck **11** than on the side of the bottom **13**. Therefore, the heating section **20** is configured so that the rod-like heater **232** among the plurality of rod-like heaters **232** that is situated at a higher position is disposed closer to the centerline **L1** of the heating transfer path **200**.

In one embodiment of the invention, since the preform **10** is transferred in the inverted state, it is possible to prevent a situation in which the preform **10** fall off, or is caught by the rod-like heater **232**. If the preform **10** is transferred in the upright state in which the neck **11** is positioned on the upper side, the preform **10** that has fallen is necessarily caught by the rod-like heater **232** that is disposed close to the centerline **L1**. According to one embodiment of the invention, such a situation does not occur.

3. Intermittent Transfer Section

As illustrated in FIGS. 5A and 5B, the intermittent transfer section **30** includes N first transfer arms **301**, N second transfer arms **302**, N third transfer arms **303**, and N fourth transfer arms **304** that move along an arm travel section **300**. A drive pulley **306** that is rotated by a motor (first drive source) **305**, and a driven pulley **307** are supported by the arm travel section **300**, and a belt **308** is fitted around the drive pulley **306** and the driven pulley **307**. A first slide member **309** that is secured on the belt **308** moves along the arm travel section **300**, so that the N first transfer arms **301**, the N second transfer arms **302**, the N third transfer arms **303**, and the N fourth transfer arms **304** supported by the first slide member **309** are simultaneously transferred by a distance **L2** in an intermittent transfer direction (first direction).

The N first transfer arms **301** that receive the preform **10** from the heating section **20** are arranged at the first pitch **P1** (heating pitch). The N second transfer arms **302**, the N third transfer arms **303**, and the N fourth transfer arms **304** that handle the preform **10**, the primary blow-molded article, and the secondary blow-molded article in the blow molding section **40** are arranged at a second pitch **P2** (blow molding pitch) that is larger than the first pitch **P1**. The N first transfer arms **301**, the N second transfer arms **302**, the N third transfer arms **303**, and the N fourth transfer arms **304** can be moved forward and backward along a forward/backward direction (second direction) that is perpendicular to the intermittent transfer direction (first direction) by driving an air cylinder (second drive source) **330**.

The support structure of the first to four transfer arms **301** to **304** is described below with reference to FIG. 6 (i.e., a partial enlarged view illustrating the first transfer arm **301** illustrated in FIG. 5B). The arm travel section **300** includes a linear guide **300A** that functions as a first rail. The first slide member **309** that moves along the linear guide (first rail) **300A** includes a linear bearing **309A** that slides on the linear guide (first rail) **300A**.

A second slide member **310** is supported by the first slide member **309**. The first slide member **309** includes a linear guide (second rail) **309B** that extends in the second direction (arm forward/backward direction) perpendicular to the first direction (direction along the distance **L2** in FIG. 5A) in

which the first slide member **309** slides. The second slide member **310** includes a linear bearing **310A** that slides along the linear guide (second rail) **309B**.

The air cylinder (second drive source) **330** that moves the second slide member **310** forward and backward is secured on the first slide member **309**, and a rod (not illustrated in FIG. 6) of the air cylinder (second drive source) **330** is secured on the second slide member **310**. The second slide member **310** moves along the linear guide (second rail) **309B** by driving the air cylinder (second drive source) **330**. The above support structure of the first transfer arm **301** is also applied to the second to fourth transfer arms **302** to **304**.

As a configuration specific to the first transfer arm **301**, a third slide member (arm support plate) **311** that supports the N first transfer arms **301** is disposed under the second slide member **310** of the first transfer arm **301**. The rod of the air cylinder **330** moves the third slide member (arm support plate) **311** forward and backward together with the second slide member **310**, so that the second slide members **310** that are provided with the N first transfer arms **301**, the N second transfer arms **302**, the N third transfer arms **303**, and the N fourth transfer arms **304** simultaneously move forward and backward along the linear guide (second rail) **309B**.

As a configuration specific to the N first transfer arms **301**, the N first transfer arms **301** can receive N preforms **10** from the heating section **20** when N preforms **10** are continuously transferred by the chain **208** (see FIG. 7). Therefore, the N first transfer arms **301** must move at the same speed as that of the chain **208**. The first transfer arm **301** differs from the second to fourth transfer arms **302** to **304** as to this position.

In one embodiment of the invention, the N first transfer arms **301** can be moved with respect to the first slide member **309** by a distance **L3** (see FIG. 5A) independently of the second to fourth transfer arms **302** to **304**.

As illustrated in FIG. 7, a first air cylinder (first forward/backward drive section) **320** is mounted on the third slide member (arm support plate) **311** that is provided with the N first transfer arms **301**. The first air cylinder **320** moves a rod **320A** forward immediately before the engagement section **208A** secured on the chain **208** reaches a given position. Therefore, the rod **320A** engages the engagement section **208A** (see FIG. 7). Accordingly, the third slide member (arm support plate) **311** can move by the distance **L3** (see FIG. 5A) along with the movement of the chain **208**.

When the third slide member (arm support plate) **311** has moved by the distance **L3** (see FIG. 5A), the first air cylinder **320** moves the rod **320A** backward to cancel the engagement with the engagement section **208A**. Therefore, the third slide member (arm support plate) **311** moves only by the distance **L3**. The holding member **214** of the transfer member **210** (see FIG. 4A) is moved downward together with the rotation shaft **212** while the third slide member (arm support plate) **311** moves by the distance **L3**, and the holding member **214** is removed from the neck **11** of the preform **10**. Therefore, the preform **10** is transferred in a state in which the preform **10** is held by the first transfer arm **301**.

In one embodiment of the invention, a third rail **310B** is provided to the second slide member **310**, and the third slide member (arm support plate) **311** that is provided with the first transfer arm **301** is movably supported by the third rail **310B**. As illustrated in FIG. 6, the third rail (linear guide) **310B** is disposed under the second slide member **310** that is supported by the first slide plate **309**. A linear bearing **311A** that slides along the third rail (linear guide) **310B** is secured on the third slide member (arm support plate) **311**. Specifically, only the first transfer arm **301** is mounted on the third slide member (arm support plate) **311**, and can move by the distance **L3** with

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respect to the first slide member **309**, differing from the structure in which the second to fourth transfer arms **302** to **304** are supported by the second slide member (arm support plate) **310**. Note that the arm support plate (**310**, **311**) is slidably supported by the first slide member **309**.

A second air cylinder (second forward/backward drive section) **322** is provided to move the arm support plate (second slide member) **311** provided with the first transfer arm **301** from the position indicated by the dot-dash line to the position indicated by the solid line in FIG. 6 with respect to the first slide member **309** (see also FIG. 5). As illustrated in FIG. 6, the second air cylinder **322** is secured on a cylinder securing plate **310C** that is formed in the slide member **310**.

The N first transfer arms **301**, the N second transfer arms **302**, the N third transfer arms **303**, and the N fourth transfer arms **304** have the configuration illustrated in FIG. 7, and hold the neck **11** of the preform **10** between a pair of arms that are closed by a biasing member (e.g., spring). The neck **11** of the preform **10** can be held by (or removed from) the pair of arms due to the biasing force of the biasing member by moving the pair of arms forward or backward. The transfer arm illustrated in FIGS. 11 and 12 of JP-A-2010-149460 may be used as the first to fourth transfer arms **301** to **304**, for example.

3.1. Inversion Section of Intermittent Transfer Section

The intermittent transfer section **30** includes an inversion section **340** that inverts the N preforms **10** from the inverted state to the upright state when the first transfer arms **301** have moved forward by the distance L2 (see FIG. 5A) (see FIG. 8). As illustrated in FIG. 8, the inversion section **340** includes a shaft **341** that is parallel to the second linear transfer path **200B** (see FIG. 2), a swing arm **342** that swings around the shaft **341**, and is bent in the shape of a crank or the like, and N inversion arms **343** that are attached to the swing arm **342**, and hold N preforms.

As illustrated in FIGS. 9 and 10, the inversion section **340** is provided on a frame **344**. An inversion motor **345** (see FIG. 8) is secured on the frame **344**, and a belt **348** is fitted around a drive pulley **346** that is driven by the motor **345** and a driven pulley **347** that is secured on the shaft **341** (see FIG. 9). The swing arm **342** is rotated together with the shaft **341** when the motor **345** is driven. FIG. 8 illustrates a state in which the preform **10** has been inverted from the inverted state to the upright state, and transferred from the inversion arm **343** to the second transfer arm **302**.

The inversion arm **343** includes a holding member **343A** that is provided at the end of the inversion arm **343**, and elastically inserted into the opening formed in the neck **11** of the preform **10** (see FIG. 8). The holding member illustrated in FIGS. 1 to 7 of JP-A-2010-149460 may be used as the holding member **343A**, for example.

The inversion arm **343** can be moved upward and downward between a turn position H1 of the holding member **343A** (see FIG. 8), and a position H2 at which the holding member **343A** can be inserted into the neck **11** of the preform **10** (see FIG. 8). An elevation motor **350** (see FIG. 8) is secured on the frame **344**. As illustrated in FIG. 9, a belt **353** is fitted around a drive pulley **351** driven by the motor **350** and a driven pulley **352**. The inversion arm **343** can be moved upward and downward with respect to the swing arm **342** due to the movement of a stationary section **354** that is provided to the belt **353**.

FIGS. 9 and 10 illustrate a holding section **360** that temporarily holds the free end of the first transfer arm **301** when the first transfer arm **301** is moved forward, and transfers the preform **10** to the inversion arm **343** in the inverted state. The holding section **360** is formed to have a shape appropriate for supporting the free end of the first transfer arm **301** that has moved forward. In one embodiment of the invention, the

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holding section **360** has a support groove **361** (see FIG. 9). The holding section **360** is driven by a forward/backward drive mechanism **362** that includes a rack & pinion mechanism or the like.

FIGS. 11 to 13 illustrate an operation that inverts the preform **10** from the inverted state to the upright state. In FIG. 11, the preform **10** in the inverted state that is supported by the first transfer arm **301** is moved forward in the direction A, and the holding member **360** is moved in the direction B to hold the free end of the first transfer arm **301**. The inversion arm **343** is then moved upward in the direction C to hold the preform **10**. The inversion arm **343** can be inverted when the first transfer arm **301** and the holding section **360** have been returned.

FIG. 12 illustrates an inversion operation. The preform **10** is inverted from the inverted state to the upright state by inverting the inversion arm **343** by 180 degrees in the D direction, for example. The position of the neck **11** of the preform **10** in the upright state is higher than the position of the neck **11** of the preform **10** in the inverted state. However, the difference in height is small. This is because the swing arm **342** that is bent in the shape of a crank is used. The difference in height can be absorbed by the elevation mechanism for the inversion arm **343**.

FIG. 13 illustrates an operation that transfers the preform **10** from the inversion arm **343** to the second transfer arm **302**. The second transfer arm **302** holds the neck **11** of the preform **10** in the upright state, and the inversion arm **343** is moved upward in the direction E while the holding section **360** holds the free end of the second transfer arm **302**. The holding section **360** is then moved in the direction F, and the second transfer arm **302** is moved backward in the direction G to complete the transfer operation. The first to fourth transfer arms **301** to **304** can then be simultaneously moved by the distance L2.

3.2. Pitch Conversion Section

FIGS. 14 and 15 illustrate a pitch conversion section **370** that is provided in the intermittent transfer section **30**. In one embodiment of the invention, the pitch conversion section **370** is provided to the inversion section **340**. Note that another configuration may also be employed. The pitch conversion section **370** may include a parallel link mechanism **371** (e.g., pantograph (magic hand)).

The N inversion arms **343** illustrated in FIG. 8 are secured on N sliders **373** that can slide along a linear guide **372** secured on the swing arm **342**. A fulcrum **371A** of the parallel link mechanism **371** is provided to each of the N sliders **373**. An air cylinder **374** is secured on the swing arm **372**. A fulcrum **371B** of the link connected to the fulcrum **371A** of the slider **372** positioned on the outermost end is secured on a rod **374A** that is moved forward and backward using the air cylinder **374**. Therefore, the pitch of the sliders **373** and the inversion arms **343** can be converted to the first pitch P1 illustrated in FIG. 14 or the second pitch P2 illustrated in FIG. 15 by driving the air cylinder **374**. The pitch conversion operation can be performed when the inversion arm **343** supports the preform **10**. In one embodiment of the invention, the pitch conversion operation is performed during the inversion operation in which the swing arm **342** swings. This makes it possible to absorb the pitch conversion time by the inversion operation time.

4. Blow Molding Section

4.1. Blow Molding Cycle

FIGS. 16A to 16D illustrate the blow molding cycle of the primary blow molding section **41** of the blow molding section **40**. FIG. 16A illustrates a state in which the preform **10** has been transferred to the primary blow molding section **41**

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using the second transfer arm **302**. A blow core **400** is set to an escape position in this state. The preform **10** in the upright state is transferred to the primary blow molding position in the forward direction in FIG. **16A** in a state in which the neck **11** of the preform **10** is chucked by the second transfer arm **302**. N preforms **10** that are simultaneously subjected to blow molding are transferred to the primary blow molding position using N second transfer arms **302**.

FIG. **16B** illustrates a state in which a pair of blow cavity split molds **401** and **402** and an optional bottom mold **403** are clamped after the preform **10** has been transferred to the primary blow molding position using the second transfer arm **302**. In this case, the blow core **400** may be set at a standby position illustrated in FIG. **16B** that is lower than the escape position illustrated in FIG. **16A**.

FIG. **16C** illustrates a state in which the second transfer arm **302** is removed from the neck **11** of the preform **10** supported by the clamped blow cavity split molds **401** and **402**. In this case, the blow core **400** is set to the standby position in the same manner as in FIG. **16B**.

FIG. **16D** illustrates a state in which the blow core **400** is set to the lower-limit position, and seals the neck **11**. A primary blow-molded article is then blow-molded from the preform **10** by blowing air through the blow core **400**, and linearly driving a stretching rod **404**.

In FIGS. **16B** and **16C**, the blow core **400** may be set to a lower position as long as the second transfer arm **302** that holds the neck **11** of the preform **10** does not interfere with the blow core **400**.

The third transfer arm **303** that holds the primary blow-molded article that has previously been formed by the primary blow molding section **41** transfers the primary blow-molded article to the secondary blow molding section **42** when the blow molding step illustrated in FIGS. **16A** to **16D** is performed. As illustrated in FIG. **16D**, the third transfer arm **303** stands by in the primary blow molding section **41** before completion of the blow molding step.

When the blow molding step (see FIG. **16D**) has completed, the blow core **400** is removed from the neck **11**, and moved upward to the escape position. The third transfer arm **303** holds the neck **11** to support the primary blow-molded article, and the blow cavity split molds **401** and **402** and the optional bottom mold **403** are opened (see FIG. **16A**). The primary blow-molded article is then transferred by the third transfer arm **303** to complete the blow molding cycle. The next blow molding cycle is then performed.

Although the blow molding cycle of the primary blow molding section **41** has been described above, the secondary blow molding section **42** that subjects the primary blow-molded article to secondary blow molding to form a secondary blow-molded article also repeats the blow molding cycle in the same manner as the primary blow molding section **41**.

The secondary blow-molded article (final molded article) formed by the secondary blow molding section **42** is transferred from the secondary blow molding section **42** to the ejection section **50** using the fourth transfer arm **304**. The ejection section **50** removes the final molded article from the fourth transfer arm **304**, and transfers the final molded article to the outside of the device.

4.2. Clamping Mechanism

The clamping mechanism can be placed in the stage **1** by molding the preform **10** in the upright state as described above. The clamping mechanism disclosed in JP-A-2009-126129 may be used as the clamping mechanism, for example. FIG. **17** illustrates the clamping mechanism of the primary blow molding section **41**. Note that the clamping

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mechanism illustrated in FIG. **17** may also be applied to the secondary blow molding section **42**.

As illustrated in FIG. **17**, blow cavity mold securing plates **420** and **422** and a bottom mold securing plate **430** are provided on the stage **1**. The blow cavity split molds **401** and **402** (see FIG. **16**) are secured on the blow cavity split mold securing plates **420** and **422**. The bottom mold **403** (see FIG. **16**) is secured on the bottom mold securing plate **430**. Sliders **424A** and **426A** are secured on the lower end of the blow cavity split mold securing plates **420** and **422**, and guides **424B** and **426B** that linearly guide the sliders **424A** and **426A** are secured on the stage **1**. The bottom mold securing plate **430** includes pressure-receiving engagement members **430A** that protrude in the widthwise direction. The blow cavity split mold securing plates **420** and **422** respectively include pressure-receiving members **420A** and **422A** that engage the pressure-receiving engagement members **430A** during clamping illustrated in FIG. **17**, and support the pressure-receiving engagement members **430A** to receive the blow pressure.

A clamping mechanism **450A** is provided inside the stage **1** illustrated in FIG. **17**. As illustrated in FIG. **18**, the clamping mechanism **450A** includes an air cylinder **452** that biases the bottom mold securing plate **430** toward the clamping position.

As illustrated in FIG. **17**, the clamping mechanism **450A** includes a first piston-crank mechanism **460** that drives the bottom mold securing plate **430**, and a second piston-crank mechanism **470** that drives the blow cavity split mold securing plates **420** and **422**. The first piston-crank mechanism **460** and the second piston-crank mechanism **470** share two turntable **462** (one of the turntables **462** is shown in FIG. **17**) that is driven based on the driving force of a motor (not illustrated in the drawings). The output of the motor is decelerated by a decelerator, and transmitted to a rotary shaft. Two turntables **462** are secured on the rotary shaft. The clamping mechanism **450A** includes two (i.e., at least one) toggle mechanisms **510A** and **510B** that respectively drive the blow cavity mold securing plates **420** and **422** based on the output of the second piston-crank mechanism **470**.

The first piston-crank mechanism **460** includes the turntable **462**, a bottom mold moving plate **464** that is guided linearly, and a first link **466**, one end of the first link **466** being rotatably connected to a first position **462A** of the turntable **462** that is shifted from the center of rotation, and the other end of the first link **466** being rotatably connected to the bottom mold moving plate **464**.

The second piston-crank mechanism **470** that drives the toggle mechanisms **510A** and **510B** includes the turntable **462**, a pulling member **472** that is guided linearly, and a second link **474**, one end of the second link **474** being rotatably connected to a second position **462B** of the turntable **462** that is shifted from the center of rotation, and the other end of the second link **474** being rotatably connected to the pulling member **472**. The pulling member **472** is guided linearly along a plurality of guide rods **476** that are suspended from the stage **1**.

The toggle mechanism **510A** includes first and second toggle arms **512A** and **514A** that are rotatably supported by the blow cavity mold securing plate **420**, and third and fourth toggle arms **516A** and **518A** that are rotatably supported by a first mold pressure-receiving member **530A** secured on the stage **1**. Shafts **520A** and **522A** that connect the first to fourth toggle arms **512A**, **514A**, **516A**, and **518A** are connected via a link arm **524A**. A third link **478A** is further provided, one end of the third link **478A** being rotatably connected to the

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shaft **522A** of the toggle mechanism **510A**, and the other end of the third link **478A** being rotatably connected to the pulling member **472**.

The toggle mechanism **510B** includes members **478B**, **512B**, **514B**, **516B**, **518B**, **520B**, and **522B** having the same function as that of the corresponding member of the toggle mechanism **510A**.

When the motor (not illustrated in the drawings) is rotated in the forward direction, the turntable **462** rotates in the clockwise direction **A** illustrated in FIG. 17, and the closing operation starts. The end of the first link **466** is situated at the position indicated by the dotted line in FIG. 17 when the closing operation starts, and the turntable **462** is rotated counterclockwise. Therefore, the bottom mold securing plate **430** and the bottom mold moving plate **464** that have been situated at a position lower than the position illustrated in FIG. 17 move upward. The pulling member **472** is situated at a position higher than the position illustrated in FIG. 17 when the closing operation starts. The pulling member **472** moves downward due to the rotation of the turntable **462** through the second link **474**. When the pulling member **472** moves downward, the shafts **520A**, **520B**, **522A**, and **522B** move downward due to the third links **478A** and **478B**, so that the first to fourth toggle arms **512A** to **518B** (that form an angle around the shafts **520A**, **520B**, **522A**, and **522B** in the open state) are displaced and positioned linearly (clamped state) (see FIG. 17).

The blow cavity mold securing plates **420** and **422** and the bottom mold securing plate **430** are synchronously moved from the start of closing to clamping due to the functions of the first and second crank piston mechanisms **460** and **470** and the toggle mechanisms **510A** and **510B**. Note that the pressure-receiving members **420A** and **422A** engage the pressure-receiving engagement members **430A** of the bottom mold securing plate **430** after the first piston-crank mechanism **460** has reached top dead center.

FIG. 18 illustrates a clamping mechanism **450B** that does not utilize the first and second piston-crank mechanisms **460** and **470** illustrated in FIG. 17. When driving the toggle mechanisms **510A** and **510B**, the lower end of the third links **478A** and **478B** illustrated in FIG. 18 is moved linearly along the guide rods **476** using a ball screw (not illustrated in FIG. 18) that is driven by a motor **451**, for example. In this case, the bottom mold **403** may be driven by an air cylinder **452** that is a drive source separated from the toggle mechanisms **510A** and **510B**. The blow cavity split molds **401** and **402** and the bottom mold **403** can be driven in synchronization by performing a sequence control process on the motor **451** and the air cylinder **452**. In the example illustrated in FIG. 18, the clamping mechanism **450B** can be provided inside the stage **1**.

Although only some embodiments of the present invention have been described in detail above, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many modifications are possible in the embodiments without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within scope of this invention.

For example, the invention may also be applied to a blow molding device that utilizes a preform other than a wide-mouth preform, and a blow molding device that molds a container other than a heat-resistant container.

A structure that continuously transfers the preform **10** that is transferred in the inverted state to the heating transfer path **200** due to rotation of the star wheel (feed section) **202** (see FIG. 1) is described below. The preform rotated by the star wheel **202** is normally transferred to a star wheel (not illus-

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trated in FIG. 1) that is provided coaxially with the first sprocket **204** illustrated in FIG. 1.

In one embodiment of the invention, such a star wheel that is provided coaxially with the first sprocket **204** is omitted. Since a star wheel is a die member, the number of expensive members can be reduced by omitting one star wheel.

In one embodiment of the invention, a push-up mechanism **250** for the transfer member **210** illustrated in FIG. 19 is provided instead of a star wheel that is provided coaxially with the first sprocket **204**. The push-up mechanism **250** pushes one of the plurality of transfer members **210** upward along a line that connects the center **O1** of the first sprocket **204** and the center **O2** of the star wheel **202** (see FIG. 1), and inserts part (holding member **214**) of the transfer member **210** into the neck **11** of the preform **10** in the inverted state.

As illustrated in FIG. 19, the push-up mechanism **250** includes a push-up section **256** that is secured on a rod **254** that is moved forward and backward by the air cylinder **252**, for example. The push-up section **256** pushes the disc **216** provided at the lower end of the transfer member **210** upward to move the entire transfer member **210** upward. The disc **216** is pushed upward from the position indicated by the dotted line to the position indicated by the solid line in FIG. 19, and the preform **10** is held by the transfer member **210**.

The disc **216** that has been pushed upward by the push-up section **256** slides on the push-up section **256** when the transfer member **210** is transferred, and is locked by the contact section **222** illustrated in FIG. 3. The transfer member **210** can thus be maintained at the elevated position.

A movable contact section illustrated in FIG. 19 may be disposed on the upstream-side end of the contact section **222** illustrated in FIG. 3. In this case, the disc **216** that has been pushed upward by the push-up section **256** slides on the push-up section **256** when the transfer member **210** is transferred, and is guided to the contact section **222** illustrated in FIG. 3 via two movable contact sections **260** illustrated in FIG. 19.

The movable contact sections **260** are biased in the arrow direction (see FIG. 19) around a fulcrum **262** due to a biasing member (e.g., spring). If the disc **216** is insufficiently pushed upward by the push-up section **256**, the movable contact sections **260** that interfere with the disc **216** rotate around the fulcrum **262** against the biasing force, so that the disc **216** can be guided to the normal position.

A rotation sprocket may be added to the transfer member **210** illustrated in FIG. 3. As illustrated in FIG. 20, a rotation sprocket **217** may be secured under the friction plate **216** provided to the rotation shaft **212**. In FIG. 3, the friction plate **216** is used as a rotation sprocket. In FIG. 20, the friction plate **216** functions only as a lower-limit stopper of the transfer member **210**. The rotation sprocket **217** illustrated in FIG. 20 engages a chain (not illustrated in FIG. 20). A rotation force is applied to the rotation sprocket **217** of the transfer member **210** transferred by the chain **208** due to engagement with a stationary chain. Alternatively, the rotation sprocket **217** may be rotated in the same direction or the opposite direction by driving the chain that engages the rotation sprocket **217**.

Although only some embodiments of the present invention have been described in detail above, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many modifications are possible in the embodiments without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within scope of this invention.

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What is claimed is:

1. A blow molding device comprising:

a heating section that continuously transfers and heats a plurality of preforms that respectively include a neck along a heating transfer path while supporting the plurality of preforms using a plurality of transfer members in an inverted state in which the neck is positioned on a lower side;

a blow molding section that simultaneously blow-molds N, where N is an integer equal to or larger than two, preforms that have been heated by the heating section in an upright state in which the neck is positioned on an upper side to form N containers; and

an intermittent transfer section that intermittently transfers the N preforms from the heating section to the blow molding section,

wherein the intermittent transfer section includes:

a pitch conversion section that converts an arrangement pitch of the N preforms from a first pitch P1 in the heating section to a second pitch P2 in the blow molding section, where second pitch P2 is greater than first pitch P1; and

an inversion section that includes N inversion arms that respectively invert the N preforms from the inverted state to the upright state.

2. The blow molding device as defined in claim 1, wherein: the heating transfer path includes a linear transfer path in which the N preforms to be transferred to the intermittent transfer section are continuously transferred; and the inversion section includes a shaft that is parallel to the linear transfer path, and a swing arm that swings the N inversion arms around the shaft.

3. The blow molding device as defined in claim 2, wherein the pitch conversion section is provided to the swing arm, and converts a pitch of the N inversion arms from the first pitch P1 to the second pitch P2.

4. The blow molding device as defined in claim 3, wherein the pitch conversion section converts the pitch of the N inversion arms while the swing arm swings.

5. The blow molding device as defined in claim 1, wherein the intermittent transfer section further includes: N first transfer arms that intermittently carry out the N preforms from the heating transfer path along a first direction, and transfer the N preforms to the N inversion arms;

N second transfer arms that intermittently transfer the N preforms transferred from the N inversion arms to the blow molding section along the first direction; and

a first drive source that intermittently drive the N first transfer arms and the N second transfer arms.

6. The blow molding device as defined in claim 5, wherein the intermittent transfer section further includes: a holding section that holds a free end of the N first transfer arms or the N second transfer arms when the N preforms are transferred between the N first transfer arms and the N inversion arms, and when the N preforms are transferred between the N second transfer arms and the N inversion arms; and

a moving mechanism that moves the holding section between a holding position and a standby position, the holding section holding the free end of the N first transfer arms or the N second transfer arms when the holding section is set to the holding position, and not interfering with the swing arm when the holding section is set to the standby position.

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7. The blow molding device as defined in claim 5,

wherein the heating transfer path includes an endless chain, and engagement sections that are formed on the endless chain at intervals of the N preforms, and

wherein the intermittent transfer section further includes: a first rail that extends along the first direction;

a first slide member that moves along the first rail;

a second rail that is supported by the first slide member, and extends along a second direction that is perpendicular to the first direction;

a second slide member that supports the N second transfer arms, and moves along the second rail;

a third rail that is supported by the second slide member, and extends along the first direction;

a third slide member that supports the N first transfer arms, and moves along the third rail;

a second drive source that drives the second slide member along the second direction;

a first forward/backward drive section that is moved forward and backward to an engagement position with the engagement section of the chain and a non-engagement position, and drives the third slide member along the third rail to move the N first transfer arms together with the chain; and

a second forward/backward drive section that drives the third slide member along the third rail by a distance by which the N first transfer arms have been moved by the first forward/backward drive section to return the N first transfer arms.

8. The blow molding device as defined in claim 5, wherein: the blow molding section includes a primary blow molding section and a secondary blow molding section;

the N second transfer arms intermittently transfer the N preforms transferred from the N inversion arms to the primary blow molding section; and

the intermittent transfer section further includes N third transfer arms that intermittently transfer N primary blow-molded articles that have been molded by the primary blow molding section to the secondary blow molding section using the drive source.

9. The blow molding device as defined in claim 8, further comprising:

an ejection section that is adjacent to the secondary blow molding section, and removes N secondary blow-molded articles to outside of the blow molding device,

wherein the intermittent transfer section further includes N fourth transfer arms that intermittently transfer the N secondary blow-molded articles that have been molded by the secondary blow molding section to the ejection section using the drive source.

10. The blow molding device as defined in claim 1,

wherein each of the plurality of preforms includes a body that follows the neck, and a bottom that closes the body, a diameter of the body being smaller on a side of the bottom than on a side of the neck, and

wherein the heating section includes a plurality of rod-like heaters that heat the body of each of the plurality of preforms, and are provided at a different height, the plurality of rod-like heaters are provided along the heating transfer path, a rod-like heater among the plurality of rod-like heaters that is situated at a higher position is disposed closer to a centerline of the heating transfer path.

11. The blow molding device as defined in claim 1, further comprising:

a star wheel that rotates and supplies the plurality of pre-forms to the plurality of transfer members in the inverted state,

wherein the heating transfer path includes a first sprocket, a second sprocket, and an endless chain that is fitted around the first sprocket and the second sprocket, and

wherein the heating section further includes a push-up mechanism that pushes one of the plurality of transfer members upward along a line that connects a center of the star wheel and a center of the first sprocket, and inserts part of the transfer member into the neck of the preform in the inverted state.

12. The blow molding device as defined in claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of transfer members includes a rotation shaft, and a friction plate that is secured on the rotation shaft, and

wherein the heating section includes a contact section that comes in contact with the friction plate along the heating transfer path.

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